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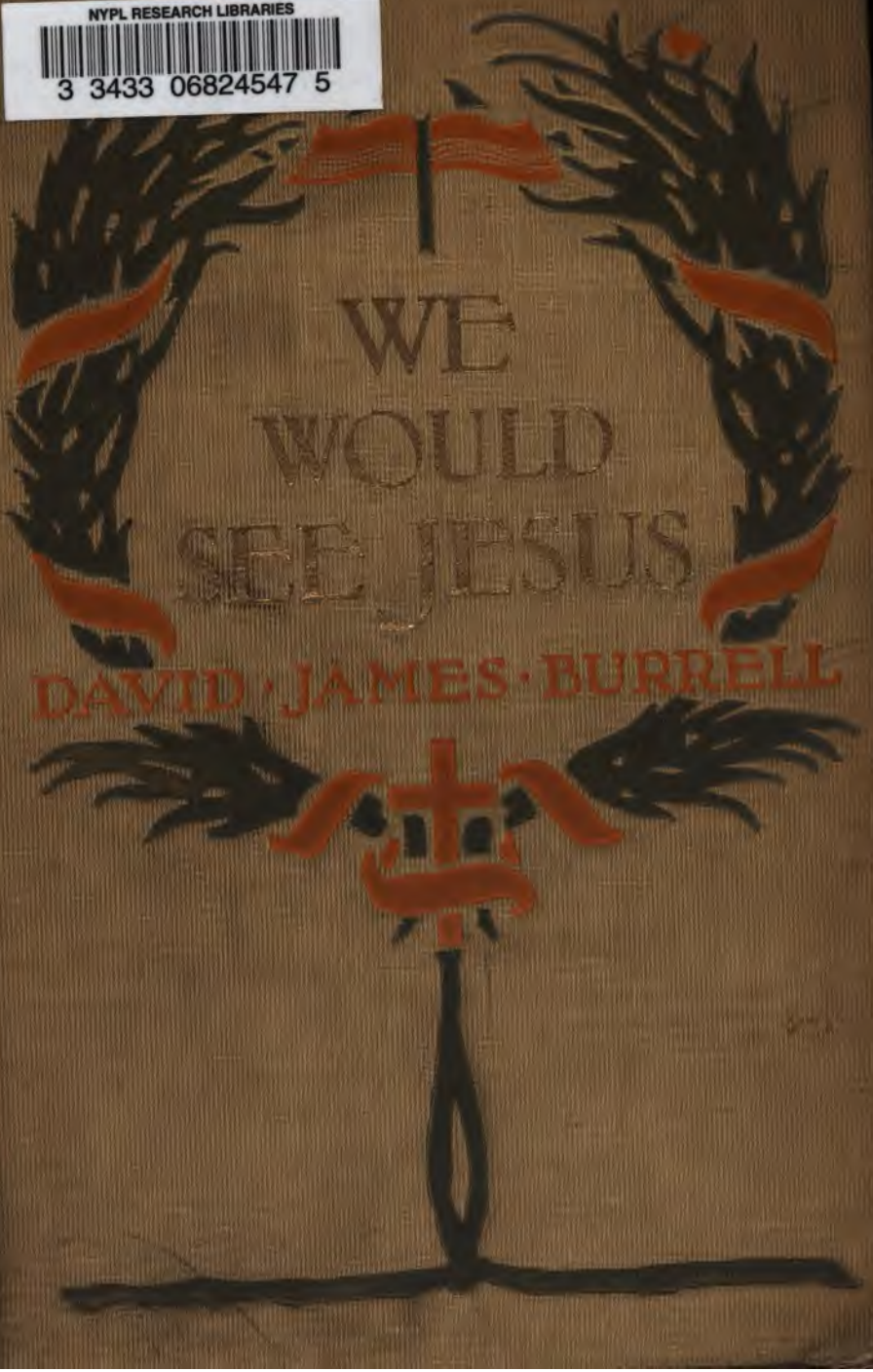
WE WOULD SEE JESUS

DAVID · JAMES · BURRELL



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Jesus with the doctors in the Temple.

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"WE WOULD SEE JESUS"

BY

DAVID JAMES BURRELL
Minister to the Marble Collegiate Church

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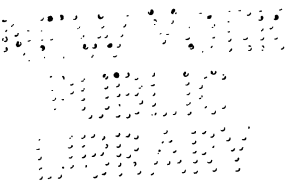

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I.

WHY WOULD WE SEE HIM?

It is related that a company of Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to attend one of the annual feasts, hearing much about Jesus the prophet of Nazareth, resolved to verify for themselves the current rumors concerning his wonderful words and works. They accordingly spoke to Philip, one of the disciples, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." These men ought to interest us, because they were, in a way, relatives of ours.

It was not strange that the Jews wanted to see Jesus, since their Oracles were full of him; but these Greeks were Gentiles, belonging to the great body of outsiders who were regarded as having neither part nor lot in the Messianic heritage. Nevertheless when they heard of Jesus they wanted to see him.

In truth, everybody would like to see Jesus. The deepest longing of the average man is to solve certain questions that revolve about him. If he were to come to our city to-day what a turnout of the people there would be—old and young, rich and poor, thronging the thoroughfares to catch a glimpse of him!

How shall we account for this universal desire to see Jesus? To make it more distinctly personal, why are you, my friend, eager to see him?

Well, to begin with, because he is the most talked-about of all the distinguished personages who have ever lived in this world of ours. His name is exploited everywhere. And this is the more remarkable when we remember that he lived in a remote corner of the earth and died above eighteen hundred years ago. How many times have you heard the name of Plato mentioned in the last twelve months, or that of Marcus Aure-

lius, or Epictetus, or Sakya Muni, or any other of the great teachers whom the nations honored in their day?

The influence of Jesus confronts us everywhere. Go into an art gallery and look around you. Here is a picture of the Annunciation, and there of the Immaculate Conception, and yonder of the Nativity, the Crucifixion or the Resurrection. Go into any library and read the titles of the books; observe how many of them have to do with his life, his teachings, his miracles, his atonement, his influence on the welfare of men and nations. Go into the universities and ask what studies are being pursued, and you will find the history, philosophy, sociology, political economy, all centering on him. Go into the public schools in most places, and observe how the attention of the children is directed to him. In some of our New York schools the teachers are not permitted to mention Christ, the only discernible reason being that there are eight hundred thousand Jews in this city and they control a formidable number of votes. This is a singular discrimination, when one reflects upon it. There is no such ban on the names of Plato or Aristotle, Cæsar, Alexander or the Duke of Wellington, Kaiser Wilhelm, or even Abdul Hamid. Why then on the solitary name of Jesus? Can it be because there is reason to fear that some of the little people might come to believe in him? In any case, the interdict itself is a tremendous tribute to the influence which Christ wields in the world to-day.

Another reason why everybody wants to see Jesus is because he has divided the world in two.

As it was in England in the time of the Stuarts, when the people sharply separated into two parties—"Jacobites," or such as were attached to the cause of the Pretender James III., and such as were opposed to him—so is the population of the civilized world to-day divided into Christians or friends of Jesus, on the one hand, and non-Christians on the other. Half the world believes him to be the Messiah, as he claimed, and the other half denies it.

Line up, my friend! You are with one party or the other; and it behooves you as a thoughtful man to be able to give a reason for being where you are.

Still another reason why everybody wants to see Jesus is

because everybody knows that he needs him or somebody just like him.

You and I need a prophet or teacher who is able to advise us as to the problems of the spiritual life; we need a priest who is able to atone for our sins; and we need a king to control and direct us. Here is One who claims to be Prophet and Priest and King; and there are some hundreds of millions of people in the world who have thus received him. It is natural that you should want to see him in order to discover whether or no he is what he claims to be.

II

WHERE CAN HE BE FOUND?

To BEGIN with, in the Bible. Here is where the chancellor of Queen Candace found him. It was on the desert road leading down to Gaza that, sitting in his chariot, he was reading from the prophecy of Isaiah: *"Who hath believed our message and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face, he was despised; and we esteemed him not."* As the man went on reading he was joined by Philip the Evangelist, who explained to him that Isaiah referred to Jesus of Nazareth, who had come into the world to suffer and die for our salvation. And then and there, seeing Jesus, he accepted him.

The Old Testament is full of him. He walks through it from Genesis to Malachi. He appears under many guises and many names: the Seed of Woman, the Messiah, the Son of David, Immanuel, the Redeemer, the Counselor, the Man of Sorrows, Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, the King of Kings, the Rose of Sharon, the Lawgiver, the Avenger, the Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God.

And the New Testament contains nothing but him. The four Gospels are biographies of Jesus written from different standpoints by four of his familiar friends. The Acts of the Apostles is the record of the beginning of his influence in history after his death. The Epistles are formulations of his teaching; and the book of Revelation is a prophecy of events

leading on to his final advent when the whole world shall bow before him.

It is a singular thing, nevertheless, that some people read the Bible and do not see Jesus. Once on a time there were two disciples who walked seven miles with him along a country road and yet did not recognize him; and the reason given is, "Their eyes were holden that they should know him not." In like manner one may read his Bible with eyes holden, and not discover Christ at all. But there he is, looking out from every page: and the man whose eyes are open, the sincere and unprejudiced seeker for truth, will have no difficulty in finding him.

Or, failing there, suppose we search for him in the newspapers. Look at some of the headlines, for example: "THE SUBLIME PORTE IN TROUBLE."

What does that mean? Not only that the unspeakable Turk is trembling on his throne, but also that his unspeakable superstition is passing. The Crescent is on the wane. Thus all false religions are doomed by the fatal logic of events. The path of history is lined with the graveyards of so-called religions. The paganism of the Pantheon. the philosophies of Greece, Zoroastrianism, the gods of Walhalla, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, all alike are dead or moribund. Islam alone survives; the religion of the sword, the slave-pen and the harem. Who now is shaking the pillars of the Sublime Porte? Who drove Abdul Hamid from his throne? The Christ of progress, who by the spreading light of the Evangel has been dissipating darkness all along the centuries and is now invading the last strongholds of the shadow of death!

The next headline reads: "WOMEN DEMAND THE BALLOT."

Whether the demand is just or not we do not here presume to say. The question is: How have women come into a position where they can demand anything? Was this possible before the beginning of the Christian era? Were the women who looked forth from behind the lattices of the Orient able to demand anything from their lords and masters? Did ancient Egypt or Assyria have any "suffragettes"? What has wrought this stupendous change in the relation of women to

the social fabric? This fact and this only: "The God of all good Christians was of a woman born." By the cumulative power of his influence he has so exalted womanhood that the very names of wife and mother and sister are revered among all the children of men.

Take another of the headlines: "CAR-DRIVERS ON A STRIKE."

To pass judgment on the merits of this or any other phase of the industrial problems is not germane to the matter in hand. The question is: How have the laboring classes come into such independence that they can demand an increase of wages or anything else? Did the men who drove the bullock-carts in Babylon three thousand years ago ever think of striking for higher wages? If not, why not? Because they were abject slaves. Who liberated them? Jesus the carpenter, who dignified labor for evermore by taking part in it; Jesus the carpenter, who pronounced that great manifesto which in the process of the years has introduced the wage-system throughout the civilized world: "The laborer is worthy of his hire!"

One more headline: "THE CORNER IN WHEAT BROKEN."

It appears that the broker who organized this particular "corner" has been driven into hiding by popular indignation. What is back of this? The Egyptians and the Assyrians had corners in wheat, and who cared? But many things have happened since then, and chief and foremost among these happenings is the promulgation of Christ's Golden Rule, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

It is obvious from such happenings as these that the world has been moving. Has it been moving automatically? No, nothing moves that way, not even the great ball of snow which children make on a winter's day. There must be something or somebody behind it. Who is behind the progress of these centuries? Jesus of Nazareth! His hand is discernible in every great movement of the day. He is behind our schools and colleges, our hospitals and reformatories, social and political reform, civil and ecclesiastical freedom, light and civilization. But for the great forces of his gospel, so far as we

can perceive, the world would have stood stock still. The Acts of the Apostles begins with a reference to "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach," and it ends with a dash—because the "doing" of Jesus which then began is still going on.

It is really a great art to read a newspaper in the right way. The philosophy of history is there; and a man whose eyes are not holden is certain to find Christ in the course of his reading. But suppose he fails to see him either in the Bible or the newspaper, where else shall he look for him?

At church. The reason why people go to church is because they expect to find him there. The bell rings thus, "Come! Come! Come! The Lord is in his Holy Temple! Come and worship him!"

The man in the pulpit is in commission and under bonds to so preach Christ that the people shall be able to see him. He has entered into a covenant vow to lift something up; and that something is not himself but Christ; as Christ himself said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself!" He is the great magnet. His is the drawing power. All adventitious attractions are ruled out. Art, science, philosophy, politics, the hurdy-gurdy and the stereopticon are not helps but hindrances except as they contribute to the seeing of Jesus in the house of God.

It happens now and then that people who go to church to see Jesus are disappointed. I once attended a service in Ireland on a holy day, in answer to an announcement that Jesus was to be seen there entombed and awaiting his resurrection; but the space before the altar was so covered with votive offerings of flowers as to completely hide the sepulcher from view. Not infrequently, in like manner, the worshippers' view of Jesus is obscured by flowers of speech, of music or of ceremonialism. But the church is his sanctuary; and usually the worshipper can there commune with him and go away gratefully saying, "I have seen Jesus."

But failing even there, where shall the seeker look for him? Let him inquire within.

If he be a Christian he is able to say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Otherwise he will not find

Christ within. Then what? The heart is an aching void without him.

But the seeker is sure to find two things within, in any case. One is sin, felt and acknowledged sin. To persuade men of sin is like carrying coals to Newcastle, since every one is aware of it. And the other is a conscious desire to be delivered from the consequences of sin. This also is intuitive and universal, as witness all the altars of the earth and all the bended knees.

It may be, however, that some reader of these lines is saying, "I have not yet seen Jesus." If so, my friend, here and now you shall look upon him.

Let me make the vision clear. Jesus came into this world of ours, out of his pre-existent glory, to expiate our sins. He took our flesh upon him, that he might be able to suffer; and kept his Godhood also, that he might be able to suffer sufficiently for all. He lived as a man among men; preached such sermons respecting the problems of the spiritual life that his hearers were moved to say, "Never man spake like this man;" and wrought such wonderful works of grace and mercy that those who beheld were moved to ask, "When the Christ shall come will he do more?"

But this was not his main errand: he had come to die for the world's sin. No, let us make it more personal—he came to die, my friend, for your sins, for yours as really as if there had been no other sinner in the world but you. To that end he "set his face steadfastly" toward the cross; and there he hung in mortal agony for six mortal hours, groaning under the burden of your sins, till his great heart broke and he cried, "It is finished!" By this he meant that he had accomplished all that God himself could do to save you.

And then, rising triumphant over death, he sent forth his messengers, of whom I am one, to say, as I say now, that all the benefits of that redeeming work are to be secured by simple faith in him. Faith is acceptance, a hand stretched forth to take. This is the sole condition: he that believeth shall enter into life! Do you believe? You have seen Jesus: do you accept him? If so, it only remains to prove the sincerity of

your faith by publicly confessing him and then going forth to follow him.

We do not know the outcome of this interview of the Greeks with Jesus. They saw him and conversed with him; but did they accept him? Let us hope they went away rejoicing in him. But perhaps not. The Greeks were the philosophers of their time; and to those who are wise in their own conceit the story of Christ crucified is "foolishness." But there was one school of philosophers who were ready to accept the truth wherever they found it; they were called "Zetetics," or seekers. To all such Christ is commended as "the wisdom and the power of God."

Are you, frankly and without prejudice, seeking a Saviour? The promise is, "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart." If you are seeking him thus, putting away self-will and prejudice, it is quite certain that you will find him. For the seeking sinner ever finds a seeking Saviour; and, finding the chiefest of ten thousand, how can he fail to accept him?

III

WHO IS HE?

A visit to the Jordan will, perhaps, satisfy us on that point. John the Baptist had been going up and down crying, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Prepare ye the way for the coming of one the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose!" He was now at the ford of Bethabara baptizing his converts with "the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." The towering cliffs by the river echoed his cry, "Repent ye! Repent ye!" Thieves and harlots came bowing low, and he baptized them. Publicans came professing sorrow for sin, and he baptized them. Soldiers came promising to quit their evil ways, and he baptized them. Scribes and Pharisees came, and he baptized them not, but cried, "Ye offspring of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. For the Seed of woman cometh to bruise the serpent's head. The Winnower cometh to purge his floor; he will gather the wheat into his garner and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The Messiah cometh to deliver the world from sin!"

It came to pass, on one of those days, that Jesus the carpenter left his shop at Nazareth and never went back to it. The clock had struck. The fields were white unto the harvest and with sickle in hand he went forth. In his heart he had long been saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He now tightened his girdle and, with staff in hand, set forth upon a journey which was not to end until, having accomplished his mission, he should return to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

He turned his steps toward the south and, pursuing the mountain road which skirted the historic battlefield of Esdraelon, came out at length into the valley of the Jordan. At the water's edge stood the prophet of the wilderness with the people about him. His voice rang clear above the murmur of the river and the voices of the multitude, "Repent ye! Repent ye!" And Jesus, making his way through the throng, presented himself to John, saying, "I also would be baptized of thee." John answered, "Nay, not thou, the Sinless One! I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" But Jesus said, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And thereupon, as a penitent, he was baptized "for the remission of sins."

How could that be? Why should he, who alone of living men was without sin, be thus baptized with the baptism of repentance?

The event has a profound significance. It marked the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. He here received his credentials as the Messiah or "Hope of Israel." The three distinctive titles by which this Messiah was familiarly known among the Jews were these, "Son of Man," "Son of David," and "Son of God"; and they were typified in the ceremony of this day's baptism.

He was truly the Son of Man. He was indeed a veritable man. His flesh was shown to be like our flesh, quivering under pain and weary with labor at the close of day. His mind was like our mind; so that "he grew in wisdom." His conscience was like our conscience, able to distinguish between right and wrong. He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." His body never triumphed over his soul; his mind was never clouded with a veil of darkness; his conscience was never warped or deflected from the right. He was human, like us, only without sin. The first Adam yielded to temptation and fell; the second Adam ate of no forbidden fruit. He was absolutely without sin.

How then could he be baptized unto repentance, for the remission of sins? In order to answer that question we must pass on to the next of the Messianic titles.

In his baptism he was also publicly shown to be the Son

of David. He was of the chosen people and of its royal line. For "Salvation is of the Jews." As a Jew he was "made under the law." Wherefore it became him to fulfill all righteousness. He submitted to the ordinance of baptism as a Levitical prescript. The time would come when this ordinance would be merged into another form of baptism of larger significance; but as yet it was of binding force, and it devolved upon him as a true Israelite to bow obediently to it. In the Old Economy there were ablutions of divers kinds. The priests and Levites were required to purge themselves at the laver. Proselytes were received into the Jewish Church in the same way. Here, at Bethabara, instead of the laver was the flowing river, and instead of the gilded roof of the Temple was the over-arching sky; but the ordinance was the same. It was meet that Jesus should submit to it.

Moreover, as the Son of David he was made not only under the ceremonial but under the moral law. This is the law whose verdict is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It is the Author of that law who now presents himself as a penitent to pass under its yoke! Thus it is written, "Who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to grasp, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death." The very depth of this self-emptying was reached when, as a penitent, he presented himself to be baptized for the remission of sins.

He was, indeed, the Sinless One. There was no guile in his heart, no guile on his lips; yet our sins were imputed to him. There lies the deep secret of his atoning grace. He so appropriated our sins that they became, as it were, his very own. In order to suffer vicariously for us he must identify himself with us. In order to serve as our substitute at the bar of the offended law he must, as it were, change personalities with us. In order to bear the death sentence which had been pronounced upon us he must appropriate our guilt. He must lose his own self-consciousness in the consciousness of our despairing need; and must be penitent for our transgressions as if they were his very own. He must come with us into the

bondage of the law if he is to deliver us into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

So he approached the water's edge bearing, like Atlas, the world's burden upon him. Of all who came that day to ask for the baptism of repentance he alone could say, "I need it not"; yet as the world's substitute he needed it most of all. His challenge was "Who layeth anything to my charge?" Yet he voluntarily bore the charge of immeasurable guilt. He was holy, harmless and undefiled; yet here he stood, the sinless sinner of the world! It was the sinful world that, in him as its divine substitute, came down to Bethabara to be baptized unto repentance. Thus he fitly began the Campaign of Redemption which was to end in his tasting death for every man.

Is the thought abhorrent? Aye, infinitely so! But the fault is ours. The further we follow him into his ministry the more abhorrent will it seem. We shall see him bowing under the olive-trees in Gethsemane and pressing to his lips a purple cup in which is the world's sin. It is the broken law that presents it to his lips, saying, "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" Every nerve and sinew of his body quivers and shrinks from it. He cries, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass away from me!" He sweats as it were great drops of blood as he passes into the deep darkness of vicarious conviction. He cannot save the world until he makes that cup of death his own. At length he cries, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt!" So, passing into the awful consciousness of the world's guilt, he drinks the bitter cup.

If we follow him to Golgotha, we shall see him, at the very climax of his vicarious pain, descending lower and lower into the penalty of sin, until at length the silence of the unnatural night is broken with a cry such as the world had never heard before and shall never hear again, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What is death but exile from God? What hell could be more frightful than divine abandonment? This is the deepest depth of his substitutionary pain. He bore it to the uttermost, that he might take away forevermore the shame, the penalty and the bondage of our sin. Thus it is written, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that

we might become the righteousness of God in him." And again that he was made "a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." So in our historic creed we say, with reason, "He descended into hell!"

In this baptism of Jesus he was moreover designated as the Son of God. We have seen him taking his place, with those who thronged to the water's edge, as the Son of Man. Thus he pushes his way to our side, consenting to be numbered with transgressors in seeking the remission of their sins.

We have seen him also, as the Son of David, bowing his head, not only to the prescript of the ceremonial law, but to the dark sentence of the moral law. Hosanna to the Son of David!

It remains for him to verify his title as the Son of God. This he must do if he would be mighty to save even unto the uttermost all that will come unto him.

Behold now three marvelous things which occurred at his baptism, by which a threefold testimony was given to his mission as the veritable Son of God.

First, the heavens were opened as if to signify the interest of angels and archangels and saints triumphant in the great campaign which was about to begin. And we shall see that heavenly host attending him all along the way.

Then, a voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There are other sons of God; but he alone is, by eminence, the well beloved. There are many sons; but he is the only-begotten Son. There are many younger sons; but he is the "firstborn among many brethren." He stands solitary and alone as the Father's co-equal Son, of whom it is written, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Did Jesus ever ask that? On the cross his stretched-out hands uttered the mightiest prayer that ever was offered: "Give me, O Father, the nations for my inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession!" Is he cut off in the midst of his days? Is he "without generation"? Nay, "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." We

are "the fruit of the travail of his soul"; and the gates of heaven are thronged with a great multitude who through him have received the spirit of adoption whereby they cry, "Abba, Father!" They are all sinners saved by grace; and unto him they ascribe the praise.

Lastly, the Spirit as a dove descended upon him. Thus we are given to understand that the three Persons of the ineffable Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, are in mutual accord and co-operation at the outset of the ministry of Christ.

This is his inauguration. At his baptism he receives his credentials as the long-looked-for Messiah and shows himself ready for the task before him. His face will henceforth be "set steadfastly" toward the cross. All along the way we shall find him persistently claiming his Messiahship as indicated in the three titles. We shall see him presently returning to his home at Nazareth; where he announces the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings," saying, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." We shall see him pausing at Jacob's well to converse with a sinful woman; to whose deep longing for the coming of the Messiah he answers, "I that speak unto thee am he!" We shall hear him in his itineraries among the villages of Galilee claiming always that he is the Christ. We shall see him in the Mount of Transfiguration, his homespun garments fluttering aside to reveal the royal purple, while his face is "as the sun shining in his strength." We shall see him standing in the presence of the Sanhedrin; and when the High Priest cries, "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," we shall hear him answering, "I am." We shall hear Pilate asking, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" that is, the Messiah; and his reply is couched in the strongest possible terms of affirmation, "Thou sayest." We shall see him hanging on the cross with the *titulum* above his head, on which his Messianic title is inscribed, "The King of the Jews." And if we pass on to Olivet we shall see him ascending from the midst of his disciples into the open heavens, where now he sits upon his Messianic throne, "expecting,

until his enemies be made the footstool of his feet," while the redeemed host, a great multitude that no man can number, ascribe unto him glory and honor and power and dominion forever and ever.

And there by God's grace we shall see him. Aye, we shall see him with these eyes. *Hisce oculis!* When we appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, and all alike plead guilty, we shall hear him say, "I bore thy sins in mine own body on the tree. I was wounded for thy transgressions and bruised for thine iniquities, that by my stripes thou mightest be healed. I promised life to all who would believe in me. My promise is Yea and Amen. Wherefore enter into the joy of thy Lord. Thy sins, which were many, are forgiven thee."

The day after this baptism, as John was standing by the Jordan with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus in the distance and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples immediately left John and followed Jesus. In this they showed themselves to be reasonable men. "Seeing is believing"; but "faith without works is dead." What could they do but follow him?

IV

WHAT SHALL THE DOUBTER DO?

A GROUP of young men were bound together by a common interest in "the Hope of Israel"; that is, the hope of the Messiah, whom for centuries "kings and prophets had longed to see and died without the sight." There was a feeling everywhere that "the fulness of time" was at hand. Rabbis were searching the oracles and astrologers were scrutinizing the heavens for signs of his appearing. Expectancy was in the air.

These young men were not of noble birth, like the knights of the Round Table who went in quest of the Holy Grail, but humble men, most of them fishermen. They had been reading their Bibles and conferring with one another concerning the matter nearest to their hearts. They were greatly perplexed by the paradoxical terms in the Messianic prophecies; now he was spoken of as a King, with "the government upon his shoulder," and again as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs." He was to reign from the river unto the ends of the earth, but he was also to be led from prison and judgment to an ignominious death. How could these things be?

It was reported that Jesus, a carpenter of Nazareth, who was going about proclaiming himself to be the Messiah, was doing so many wonderful works and preaching so eloquently that multitudes were thronging after him.

John the Prophet of the Wilderness was preaching and baptizing at the fords of the Jordan; and these young men went to hear him. Strange to say they heard John approve of the carpenter's claims! He said, "This is he that cometh after me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." On

seeing Jesus walking by the river he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

All of these young men but one were satisfied that Jesus was the Christ. Nathanael held out. He could not reconcile the humble station of Jesus with the glowing prophecies of Scripture. So when Philip came to him saying, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets, wrote," his answer was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The fact that Nathanael was a doubter was nothing against him.

For that matter, we are all doubters. The great problems of the eternal life are constantly before us; and I seriously question if there is any living man who does not at times feel a trembling of his faith—like the oscillation of the magnetic needle in the compass—as to God and immortality and all the great propositions which lie within the province of the unseen and eternal. And I am inclined to think that all these doubts are centered at a common point, namely: "Has God revealed himself to men?" or, in other words, "Is Jesus the Christ?" That is the vital question. Let that be answered, and all other problems are easy of solution. If Jesus is the Christ, if he is "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," then all perplexities as to life and immortality are brought to light; then a ransom has been provided for sin; then God "can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly"; then those who believe can look forward to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away"; then heaven is our home and we are pilgrims living our life here with a view to life eternal, and moving on toward "a better country and a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

But just here is where doubt begins. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Is it possible that this Man in homespun, who proclaimed himself to be the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and who died for "making himself equal with God," was what he claimed to be?

It was seven hundred years before the Advent that Isaiah wrote, "Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? . . . He is despised and rejected of men; and we hid as it were our faces from him."

The attitude of men with reference to Christ has never changed. Paul echoed the prophet's lament in these words: "The Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

But while Nathanael erred at this point of common departure from faith, there were other considerations which made his case a hopeful one.

He was a devout man. It would appear that he had a trysting-place under a certain fig-tree. The habit of retirement for prayer and meditation was common to the Orientals of those days. The shadow of the fig-tree was this man's closet, where he retired that he might be alone with God. It was here that Nathanael gave himself to earnest thought. The truth-seeker must always arrive at his destination by a pathway of his own. He may attend church to hear the argument; but he must go apart by himself to consider it. He cannot farm out his thinking to any church or ecclesiastical court, to any Pope or College of Cardinals, to any minister or mortal man. He must do his own thinking, else he will never solve the problem whether Jesus is the Christ or not.

It was here, under the fig-tree, that he turned to the oracles for the satisfaction of his doubt. We search the Scriptures for light. The first Bible that I ever owned was given me by my mother, on the fly-leaf of which was written in her dear hand, "The entrance of thy Word giveth light." The Book is like a mountain-top to which a man climbs that he may behold the break of day. He who doubts as to the deity of Jesus need not expect to solve the problem unless he is willing to "search the Scriptures," for "these are they which bear witness of me," said Jesus.

It was in this trysting-place that Nathanael was accustomed to offer his prayer for light; a prayer which God is always more willing to answer than we are to offer it.

And this is all that Christ asks. He calls for a calm, prayerful, intelligent and unbiased consideration of his claims: "Come now and let us reason together." He does not appeal

to credulous simpletons or to indolent dullards who are governed by hearsay, but addresses himself to the common sense of the average man. He bids us weigh the evidence *pro* and *contra,* weigh it well, and decide whether he is the Christ or not.

So far, then, there was hope for Nathanael; because, though a doubter, he was facing the problem for himself, like a man. But this is not all.

He was an honest man. Otherwise Jesus would not have referred to him as "an Israelite in whom is no guile."

By this we are to understand that he was without prejudice. Doubt is common to all, owing to the prevalence of sin; but prejudice is a deep-rooted aversion to truth. Doubt is a film over the eyes, which may be removed; but prejudice is a disease of the optic nerve. Doubt is a fog rising from the low valley of sin, which vanishes at the break of day; but prejudice is a miasm which no sunlight can dispel. Doubt is a ship becalmed, which a rising wind can speed upon her way; but prejudice is a ship with an anchor astern and a hawser at her bow, which only a cyclone can move. Doubters are healed of their blindness by the divine touch; but prejudice requires a miracle; as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, a sunburst straight from God!

The mind is so perverted by prejudice that no evidence can affect it. Prejudice is pre-judgment. When a case is prejudged there is nothing more to be said. A man who has "made up his mind" on a case pending in court is rejected as a juror because argument will not avail with him. There is many a man who calls himself an honest doubter, with reference to the deity of Jesus, who is simply an out-and-out infidel, because he has prejudged the case. His mind is so made up that evidence cannot change it.

The heart likewise is so affected by prejudice that truth cannot enter it. It has many guests, like the Inn at Bethlehem, such as avarice, sensuality, inordinate ambition; but Christ knocks in vain.

It is related that when Paul, in the judgment hall at Cæsarea, told of his own conversion and of the death and resurrection, Agrippa was so impressed that he said, "Almost thou

persuadest me to be a Christian." In fact, however, he was far from being "persuaded." He was convinced but set against Christ, because his heart was wholly preoccupied. It was full of his mistress, Bernice, who sat beside him.

The young ruler who came running to Jesus and prostrated himself, crying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" was in no condition to consider the problem of eternal life, because his heart was filled with the passionate love of gold. It was for this reason that Jesus said, "Go part with everything that thou hast; then come and follow me." In other words, the preoccupation of the heart must be disposed of by repentance before Christ can enter in.

The will, in like manner, is so stiffened by prejudice that any vital grasp of truth is impossible. When Galileo was summoned before the Inquisition to be tried for heresy, in that he affirmed the revolution of the earth, he said to his judges, "I can convince you. Here is my telescope; look through it, and you shall see the moons of Jupiter!" But they refused to look. They were convinced that the earth did not revolve around the sun, and no amount of evidence could unconvince them.

In such a case, where mind, heart and will are warped against truth, there is little or no hope. A doubter of this sort is self-doomed to unbelief. He thinks obliquely, prays, if at all, to himself and reads the Bible with jaundiced eyes. Jesus told the Pharisees that it was vain for them to search the Scriptures, which testified plainly for him, because, as he said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

The effect of prejudice is likened to witchcraft by Paul where he says, "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among you?"

But Nathanael, though a doubter, was open to conviction. Therefore, his doubts vanished and he became

A believer As he sat under the fig-tree his friend Philip approached, saying, "We have found the Messiah!" And when Nathanael gave expression to his incredulity, the answer was, "Come and see!"

He came and saw and was conquered. His doubt as to the Messiahship of Jesus was solved by the fact that his mind

was ready to weigh the evidence, his heart was open to the entrance of truth, and his will was in a condition to act upon it. At the close of his interview with Christ, being convinced of the validity of his claims, he made his confession, "Thou art the Son of God!"

And thence onward the pathway was plain before him. Christ promised that he should "see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"; that is, that the truth of his Messiahship should be made clearer and clearer until Nathanael should behold all the divine glory centering in and resting upon him. So it is written "We shall know if we follow on to know." We hear of Nathanael only once more; when, three years later, he stood with the disciples on the lake-shore and saw Jesus with the splendor of the resurrection shining in his face. By this we are given to understand that he persevered as a faithful follower of Christ.

The appeal of the gospel is to honest doubters; for honest doubters are reasonable men. The question of the deity of Jesus must be settled, like other great problems, by an appeal to the facts. The final argument is, "Come and see!"

A hundred years ago a book was written in England to prove that it was impossible for a vessel to cross the ocean by the power of steam, for the reason that no vessel could store enough coal. The first copy of the book that reached this country was brought over in a steamship! The argument was refuted by the fact; and there was no controverting it.

In "Harper's Magazine," fifty years ago, there appeared a cartoon representing a man speaking into a hole in the wall and holding a trumpet to his ear. Presently the telephone was at hand and the cartoon lost its force. So I say the ultimate appeal in every argument is to facts; and the greatest fact in the moral universe is Christ.

To every honest doubter, therefore, we address the words of Philip, "Come and see!" Open your Bible and you shall see the majestic figure of Christ walking through it from the prophecy in Genesis, "The Seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head," down to the prophecy of Malachi, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in its wings." Open your history and you shall see the

figure of Christ looming up more and more in the progress of the centuries until all the Cæsars and Alexanders seem like pigmies beside him! Then listen to the testimony of hundreds of millions of people who certify out of their personal experience that Christ has power on earth to forgive sin. And having done all this, look within. Hear the cry of your own soul for pardon and peace; and, lifting your eyes, behold the Lamb of God!

No more than this is asked of honest men, and surely no less. Do you own reading; do your own thinking; face the problem as men who must stand alone at the great assize. Here is Jesus. He is his own best argument. Behold him! Let him speak for himself. He is able to save unto the uttermost all who will come unto him. Take no man's word for it. Come and see!

V

WILL YOU LOOK AT THIS SINGULAR MAN?

It is related that Jesus on one of his journeys came to Sychar, where Jacob's well was; and "being wearied with his journey he sat thus" (that is, like any weary man) "by the well."

This man on the well-curb is well worth looking at because, though obviously a man, he claims to be the only begotten Son of God. He claims to have been "in the glory of the Father before the world was." He claims to have come into the world on a definite errand; namely, to deliver men from the power of sin. He claims that when his errand is accomplished he will return again to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. These are stupendous claims. It behooves us to know whether they are true or not; for in them are involved the issues of life.

Observe, *he is a man.* This is easy to see. He is "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh"; that is, "able to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities" because he is one of us.

He is a poor man. Not a prince in purple, nor a beggar in rags, but one of the Third Estate of toiling men. He has no home of his own. "The foxes have holes," he said, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He has no well-filled purse. He has come to Sychar afoot. No doubt many travellers passed him on beasts of burden or borne in gilded palanquins and chariots; but he trudged on, staff in hand.

If he was what he claimed to be, then all the wealth in the bosom of the everlasting hills belonged to him; but he had stooped to share the struggles of the poor, that he might be able to sympathize with all "prisoners of poverty," and that

we, by his poverty, might become rich toward God. 2 Cor. 8:9.

He is a man of sorrows. You may read that in his face. The chastening touch is there. He is bearing some burden that weighs heavily upon him. What is it? "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Nay, more, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." If we follow this wayfaring man we shall presently see him coming to Calvary, bearing his cross. This is the burden of the world's sin, and he will bear that burden until his great heart shall break under it.

He is a benevolent man. That is written in his face. This journey to Sychar is a labor of love. "He must needs go through Samaria," a roundabout way, to meet a sinful woman who needed him. This was his habit. His biography is written in the brief monograph "He went about doing good." On his itineraries among the villages the sick were laid on couches along the way and "he had compassion upon them and healed them all."

He is a sinless man. And here we part company with him. "For there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." It is recorded of Adam that he was made without sin but also without positive character. For that he must be exposed to trial. He was tempted accordingly and fell! This man at the well is "the second Adam," who was also born in innocence and subject to trial. He too was tempted, and won out!

In this he stands solitary and alone among all the children of men. He never committed a wrong act; he never spoke a wrong word; he never entertained a wrong thought. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." His challenge was "Who convicteth me of sin?" The answer was made by Pilate, who sentenced him to death: "Behold the man; I find no fault in him at all!" And this is the testimony of all the succeeding ages. Not even the bitterest of the foes of Jesus has found a joint in the harness of his perfect righteousness. He stands alone, the one incomparable man.

For this reason he calls himself "the Son of Man." Observe, he never calls himself a Son of Man, but always "*the* Son of Man"; thus setting himself apart as the perfect or

ideal man. He stands for man as God planned him: man without sin, man worthy of his birthright as the child of a holy God.

And therefore he is an unaccountable man. This perfection of his is like the "x" in an algebraic problem, which must be reduced to known terms. How shall that be done? It is impossible unless we are prepared to consent that he was more than a man.

The problem was attempted by Theodore Parker, the great leader of radical Unitarianism, who was forced to this conclusion: "The mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the Spirit of God, wrought in his bosom. What deep divinity of soul! He unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages. He gives free range to the Spirit of God. He sets aside the law, sacred and time-honored as it was, its forms, its sacrifice, its Temple and its priest. He puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven and true as God!"

The infidel David Strauss faced the same problem and reached this conclusion: "If in Jesus the union of self-consciousness with the consciousness of God has been real, and expressed not only in words but in all the conditions of life, then he represents within the religious sphere the highest point, beyond which posterity cannot go: yea, which it cannot even equal: inasmuch as every one who hereafter should climb to the same height could only do so with the help of Jesus who first attained it."

The infidel Renan faced the problem likewise and arrived at this conclusion: "The highest consciousness of God which ever existed in the breast of humanity was that of Jesus. Whatever may be the surprises of the future, he will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus. Repose now in thy glory, noble founder! Thy work is finished, thy divinity is established. Take possession of thy kingdom,

whither by the royal road which thou hast traced ages of worshippers shall follow thee!"

The infidel Rousseau, own brother of Voltaire in revolutionary thought, faced the problem and reached this conclusion: "Is it possible that this sacred personage should be a mere man? What sweetness and purity of manner! What sublimity in his maxims! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man who could so live and die without weakness and without pride? When Plato describes his imaginary 'Just Man' he portrays precisely the character of Christ. I cannot understand the blindness of those who compare Socrates with him. If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a god!"

All this however, is lame logic, from beginning to end. It either goes too far or not far enough. The algebraic "x" is not reduced to known terms by saying that Jesus was "more than a man." This is to journey up a blind alley and arrive at a stone wall. To stay there is impossible; one must go further or go back. To go back is to affirm that Jesus was an impostor; to go further is to acknowledge that he was what he claimed to be.

But this is to affirm that *he was the Divine Man; that is, "the only begotten Son of God," and therefore equal with God.*

It had been prophesied that when the Messiah came it would be as God's only begotten Son. "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee."

At the baptism of Jesus a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and again on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him."

The disciples thus recognized him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God"; and Peter particularly in his good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Christ himself repeatedly affirmed it. At his trial, when the High Priest said, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," he answered, "Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you,

henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven!" That he intended this to be the strongest possible affirmation is evident from what followed: "Then the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? . . . What think ye? They answered, He is worthy of death." Thus he died for "making himself equal with God."

The importance of a definite understanding in this matter is emphasized in the words, "He that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." It is clear, therefore, that there can be no middle ground. We are bound to conclude that Jesus, in setting up his claim as God's equal, was an impostor and a charlatan or else he was what he claimed to be.

To my mind the only solution of the problem is that which was arrived at by Napoleon when he said, "I know men; and I tell you that Jesus was not a mere man! Superficial minds see a resemblance between him and the founders of empires; but there is none. Everything in him astonishes me. His spirit overawes me; his will confounds me. His birth and his life, the profundity of his doctrine, his march across the centuries, are for me a mystery insoluble. Here is a grandeur which overpowers me. In his death sin is expiated and justice satisfied. What a mysterious symbol, this cross of the God-man. You speak of Cæsar and Alexander, of their conquests and the enthusiasm which they kindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but can you conceive of a dead man making conquests with an army devoted to his memory? Can you conceive of Cæsar governing an empire from the depths of his mausoleum? Such is the perpetual miracle of progress; the power of the Christian's God! He has founded his empire on love; so that at this hour millions would die for him. What a proof of his divinity! He speaks and generations are bound to him by the closest of ties. Here am I at St. Helena, chained to this rock; and who thinks of me? Behold the destiny of Napoleon the Great! What an abyss between my misery and

the eternal reign of Christ. By this I perceive that Jesus is God!"

The point I am trying to make is this: that *the deity of Jesus is conclusively proven by his perfect humanity.* I know there are other ways. You may demonstrate his deity by showing his perfect correspondence with the prophecies of Scripture; or by showing how he marches through history in the vanguard of civilization toward the Golden Age: but to my mind a stronger argument is based upon his character as the unaccountable man. It seems impossible that any one should look fixedly at him without perceiving that he was more than man: and if so, then by the force of irresistible logic we are driven to the conclusion that he was the very Son of God.

The centurion who took charge of the crucifixion of Jesus was a Roman soldier, hardened to the contemplation of pain. As he beheld the mortal anguish of the sufferer on the cross there was something that baffled him. In view of the meekness and calm patience of Jesus he was moved to say, "Certainly this was a righteous man!" But that was not enough; it did not satisfy him. As the hours passed, the great truth broke upon him, and he was driven at length to exclaim "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

The weary man at the well sits waiting. The woman whom he came to meet—a Samaritan woman, a woman with a past—approaches with a pitcher on her shoulder. He asks for a drink; and in the conversation which follows he opens up to her the doctrine of spiritual life. She expresses a hope in the coming Christ: he says "I that speak to thee am he!" and thereupon he offers her of the living water, of which, if a man drink "he shall never thirst," which "shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

The man at the well is waiting still. Let him that is athirst take of the water of life freely. Oh, for a drink "from the well beside the gate at Bethlehem!" He that drinketh of this water shall doubt no more that Jesus is the Christ of God.

For when all is said it still remains that the strongest argument for the divinity of Christ is found in personal experience. The doubter will never know until, like doubting

Thomas, he thrusts his fingers into the Saviour's wounds. Not until he touches the uttermost depths of his great humanity will he reach the supreme truth of his perfect divinity. To see him living is to wonder; to see him dying is to believe! The man whose heart and conscience have been purged by the blood of Jesus never halts at the confession of Thomas who, in the moment of his great discovery, cried, "My Lord and my God!"

VI.

CAN OUR EYES BE OPENED?

THE NINTH chapter of John is like a finger-post, pointing the way for those who really wish to see Jesus and know the truth about him. It is a drama, in five scenes, entitled

OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT:

or

FIVE STEPS TO A SAVING FAITH.

Its Dramatis Personæ are as follows:

Jesus the Wonder-worker.
His Disciples.
A Blind Man.
His Parents.
Friends and Neighbors.
Members of the Sanhedrin.

Scene I. At the Gateway of the Temple.—The blind man sits beside the gate, his hand extended for alms. Jesus returning from Bethany, where he has passed the night, enters with his disciples, preparatory to preaching in Solomon's Porch. The sight of the blind man suggests to the disciples the old question of Original Sin, which they refer to Jesus for settlement:

"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

He answers, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." We are not to understand by this that either the blind man or his forebears had been sinless; since "there is no difference; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but what Jesus meant was that the point raised by his

disciples was not germane to the matter in hand. It was not so important to discover the cause of the man's blindness as it was to determine what should be done about it. We busy ourselves going round and round in the mazes of "fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," while men are suffering and dying about us. So Jesus continues, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world."

He then spat on the ground and made clay, with which he anointed the eyes of the blind man, saying, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam;" and, with this, he and his disciples passed on.

"Go wash in the pool of Siloam." Why so? Was it not enough for the Wonder-worker to touch his eyes and say, "Receive thy sight"? No; God helps those who help themselves. His boundless grace is free; but it is conditioned upon our acceptance of it and our co-operation with him.

Scene II. On the Way to the Pool.—The blind man is groping, leaning on a staff, accompanied by friends and acquaintances who are curious to see what will come of it.

Some are saying, "Why wash in Siloam? There is no virtue in the waters of the intermittent spring. You'll simply have your labor for your pains."

"Who is Jesus," others are asking, "that you should obey him? The rabbis have pronounced him a charlatan and mischief-maker. It is rumored that they mean to destroy him."

Still others urge the danger of his course; for the Sanhedrin has decreed that any who espouse the cause of Jesus shall be cast out of the synagogue.

To all of whom he answers, "I am going to the pool. It is, indeed, a forlorn hope. I know little about Jesus save that he has performed many wonderful cures. They say he has cleansed lepers, restored paralytics and given sight to other blind men. Had you ever been blind, you would know why I am resolved to obey him. It may heal me."

He has reached the pool. Was there any kind hand to help him to the water's edge? He is bending over it. He dips

up the water in the hollow of his hands and washes his eyes. The light begins to dawn! He dips it up again. "My sight returns!" he cries. "I see the blue sky! I see the golden dome of the Temple! O blessed light! I see! I see!"

Scene III. In the Streets of Jerusalem.—A crowd has gathered about the man. He is the observed of all observers. A discussion is going on.

"Is not this he that sat and begged by the Temple gate?"

Some say, "This is he," others, "He is like him," but he settles the matter by saying, "I am he."

"Tell us, how were thine eyes opened?"

"A man that is called Jesus," he answers, "made clay and anointed mine eyes and said unto me 'Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.' I went and washed and received my sight."

"Where is this Jesus?"

"I know not. I would, indeed, that I did know; for I should rejoice to thank him. O blessed light of the sun! This Jesus has opened mine eyes!"

Scene IV. In the hall Gazith of the Temple.—The members of the Sanhedrin are assembled for important business. The man whose sight was restored has been summoned and is present with his parents. The rabbis proceed to catechize him. He proves to be no dull fellow in this contest of wits.

"Art thou the blind man who sat by the gate of the Temple?"

"I am."

"How didst thou receive thy sight?"

"A man that is called Jesus put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and received my sight."

"When did this occur?"

"Yesterday."

At this there is a lifting of eyebrows; for yesterday was the Sabbath. Some of the rabbis are saying, "This Jesus is evidently a sinner, since he has broken the Holy Day." Others say, "How could a sinner do such miracles?" So there is a division of opinion among them. They refer the matter to the blind man.

"What sayest thou of him in that he hath opened thine eyes?"

"He is a prophet"; that is, a great man.

As there are still some in the Sanhedrin who question the validity of the miracle, the parents of the blind man are called, at this point, and examined respecting it.

"Is this your son who was born blind?"

"It is."

"How then doth he now see?"

"We know that this is our son, and we know that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth we know not, or who hath opened his eyes we know not. He is of age; ask him. Let him speak for himself."

They are thus non-committal for prudential reasons. They do not propose to be put out of the synagogue if they can avoid it.

The fact of the cure being now indubitable, the inquisitors turn again to the blind man, saying, "Give God the praise, for he hath wrought a great work upon thee. As for this Jesus, he is a sinner and thou shouldst have nothing to do with him."

"Whether he be a sinner or no," he answers, "I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

"Tell us," they continue, "what did he unto thee? How opened he thine eyes?"

"I have told you already," he answers, "and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?"

Thereupon they lose their tempers and revile him: "Thou art his disciple! As for us, we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is."

"Why, herein is a marvellous thing," he exclaims, "that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. God heareth not sinners. If this Jesus were not of God he could do nothing." Sound reasoning, indeed; but it only served to further anger them.

"Thou wast altogether born in sins," they cry, "and dost thou presume to teach us?" and they cast him out.

So he went forth, with the awful ban of excommunication

upon him. Let no Jew extend a helping hand to him! Let none put a cup of water to his lips! He is anathema; an outcast for Jesus' sake.

Scene V. A Lonely Place, outside the City Walls.—The Outcast wanders alone. There is a sound of approaching footsteps. Jesus draws near. He has come to seek the Outcast. Oh, blessed, seeking Saviour! He speaks to the man:

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

"Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

"Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee."

"Lord, I believe!" And he worships him.

So ends the drama, *"Out of Darkness Into Light."* So always ends the drama of spiritual deliverance, with the sinner prone at the feet of Jesus worshiping him.

In the course of this narrative we observe the *Five Steps in the Development of Saving Faith.*

At first the man could say no more of his deliverer than that he was "a man called Jesus."

In this there was obviously no power to save. All the world believes in the historic Christ, to wit: that once on a time there lived a man called Jesus, who went about doing good, working miracles, preaching great sermons, and ending his career in a shameful death on an accursed tree.

The second development of this man's faith was when he affirmed that Jesus was a "prophet," or great man.

It is true that Jesus uttered "thoughts that breathe in words that burn." He preached the Sermon on the Mount. The praises of his wisdom are sung by multitudes who totally reject his power to save. The French freethinker, Renan, says, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, this Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing. His legend will call forth tears without end. His sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; and all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than he!"

A third step was taken when the blind man affirmed in the presence of his hostile judges that Jesus was "of God."

But the confession has still no saving power in it. To

affirm that the life of Jesus was a reflection of the divine beneficence is but satirical praise if the claim be denied that he was vastly more than any other man. To say that he was "a man at his best" is but to mock his honesty. Spinoza, the Jewish pantheist, confesses that "Christ was the very temple of God since in him we have the fullest revelation of God." David Strauss, the German infidel, says, "In Jesus the union of self-consciousness with the consciousness of God has been real, so that he represents within the religious sphere the highest point, beyond which posterity cannot go." Theodore Parker, while denying the divine claims of Jesus, cries, "How did the spirit of God work in his bosom! What deep divinity of soul! In whom did ever the tide of humanity rise so high as in him?" Unitarians have generally approved the saying, "In Jesus we observe the highest manifestation of God that ever was seen in mortal man."

The fourth step was taken when the blind man said, "I believe in the Son of God."

But even this, if it were merely an intellectual apprehension of his divineness, had no power to save. To be orthodox is not necessarily to be Christian. One may believe in the incarnation and yet not follow Christ. Intellectual assent is not faith. Napoleon conceded everything that Jesus claimed for himself as the very Son of God; yet his life was infinitely far from the life which is hid in Christ with God.

The fifth and final step was taken when the blind man, having said, "Lord, I believe," fell down and "worshiped him."

This means that he then and there took this Son of God to be his Lord and Saviour. This is faith; a hand stretched forth to appropriate. It is the first personal pronoun possessive that brings us into the kingdom of God. "My" and "mine"; these are the touchstones of spiritual life.

Not long ago I was assigned to a room in a hotel, where, as I entered, I observed a coil of rope suspended from the window casing. It was a fire-escape with the slip-noose and a succession of knots; simple enough, but so adapted to its purpose that I said within myself, "I believe in it." But suppose a fire had occurred that night and every avenue of escape

had been cut off? I would have uncoiled that rope, bound the loop about my waist and committed myself to it. That would have made the fire-escape a very different thing for me. I should have made it experimentally mine; my faith would have put an effectual seal of approval upon it because it had saved me.

The Drama, *"Out of Darkness into Light,"* has no recorded sequel. Its central figure is a nameless man; and no more is heard of him. The day came, however, when his eyes were closed to this world and opened in the kingdom of light, and again he saw Jesus, not clad in homespun, but crowned with glory. The King in his beauty! The blind man had come at last out of darkness into the marvelous light.

So may we realize the possibilities of faith in creed and practice—so may we worship Christ and follow on—until the day break and the shadows flee away! Then with open eyes beholding, we shall be able to say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

VII

HOW PETER SAW HIM

It was toward the close of Peter's career that he wrote a "General Epistle"—that is, a letter addressed to no Church in particular but "to all whom it may concern"—in which he defended his faith in Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God.

Now Peter was not a *doctrinaire.* He was unfamiliar with the learning of the schools. He was frank to acknowledge his ignorance of many things that university professors knew then and know now; but with respect to the power and coming of Christ he professed an absolute certainty. His creed was short; but it embraced all the essentials of Christian faith, and it was based on the authority of the Word of God.

The truth for which he thus stood had been called in question. The trustworthiness of Scripture was denied, without which there is no ultimate authority for the deity of Christ or any other fundamental truth. There were those who affirmed that many of the events recorded in the Gospels were "cunningly devised fables": such as the virgin birth, the miracles, and the resurrection of Christ. (Strange, is it not, how history repeats itself?) What has Peter to say to the objections of these men? He has one transcendent recollection with which to answer it. An incident had occurred thirty years before which had so impressed itself upon his mind and conscience and heart that he never could forget it. He had seen Jesus with the glory of Godhood shining in his face!

Let him tell his own story: "It was at the close of our Lord's journey through Cæsarea-Philippi. By the way he had

much to say respecting his approaching death. We could not understand it. His death! We expected him to take his place upon the Messianic throne and rule in splendor as the long-predicted Son of David. But he spoke of suffering many things at the hands of the priests and rabbis and of being crucified. At length we came to Mount Hermon. It was toward the close of the day and the Master signified that he would go apart for a season. So he climbed the mountain path, the two sons of Zebedee and myself following close after, at his desire. Far to the west lay the Mediterranean, glorious in the sunset; and in the distant east the Euphrates ran like a torrent of blood among its mountains and historic ruins. At length we paused, and, wearied with climbing, fell asleep.

"We were presently awakened by the murmur of voices. The Master was changed! His coarse blue garments were like ermine; his face was all aflame as the sun shineth in his strength. And two companions were with him, whom we knew, as by intuition, to be Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet who had ascended a thousand years before in a chariot of fire. We were awestruck, amazed. I spoke at length: 'Master, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' I knew not what I said. There was no answer. Then came the luminous cloud, the Shekinah which long centuries before had disappeared from above the mercy-seat; and as it folded us in we were afraid. And there came a voice out of the most excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son!' We had fallen upon our faces; the Master touched us; we arose and looked about us. The glory had faded; the celestial visitants were gone and Jesus stood alone.

"The years have passed, but the scene is as fresh in memory as if it had been but yesterday. We are under no delusion. We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father the honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory. This voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word

of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit. We saw this foregleam of the Parousia, his final coming to be King over all and blessed forever. How can our faith tremble? We believe in his power. We believe in his coming. We shall see him in his glory in that day!"

No more important problem could be presented for our consideration than the one before us, "What think ye of this Jesus which is called the Christ?" He claimed to be very God of very God. He might have escaped the cross by withdrawing that claim, but he refused to do so. He died for making himself equal with God! There is, therefore, no middle ground. It will not do to say that he was "the best of men." He was either an impostor or else he was what he claimed to be. What think ye? The rabbis were wont to say, "The secret of Messiah is the secret of man." If so, it behooves us to solve this problem and to solve it aright; for out of it flow the issues of eternal life.

There are three ways of approaching the question and only three:

The first is the Zetetic Method. The Zetetics were a school of philosophers who were so called because they professed to be "seekers after the truth." They proposed to arrive at truth by the processes of pure reason, without any aid whatsoever.

We may attempt to solve this problem in the same manner, that is, by reasoning it out; but the result is a foregone conclusion. We shall find ourselves going further and further into the dark. A man might as well undertake to sail a vessel to Liverpool without chart or compass or skipper or pilot or the slightest knowledge of navigation. He would go round and round and get nowhere, or else go down on the open sea. The attempts of philosophers to arrive at spiritual truth in this manner have always led them up a blind-alley with nothing but confusion to show for it. "Canst thou by

wisdom find out God?" How then can we expect, by the ordinary processes of reason, to find out the only-begotten Son of God?

The second method of procedure is the Scientific Method. This involves the use of all possible aids: and it is as sensible as it is scientific. If one wishes to know about the life and character of Cæsar how does he go about it? Does he sit down alone in a solitary place to reason it out? In that case nothing would come of it. He would have his labor for his pains. On the contrary, he gets all the documentary evidence he can; he consults the original documents, the Orations and "Commentaries" of Cæsar, the writings of Livy and Josephus and Suetonius, the biographical dictionaries and everything else germane to the question; and from these he forms a conclusion as to the matter in hand.

Any one who is sincerely desirous of knowing about Christ will pursue a like method, and he will examine three books in particular with the utmost care.

One of these is the Old Testament; to which Peter refers as "the word of prophecy made more sure, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place." No man who reads the Old Testament without bias can fail to see Christ walking through it from the first prophecy in Genesis, "The Seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head," down to the last prophecy of Malachi, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in its wings." His name is written between all its lines. His face, so marred yet so divinely beautiful, shines forth on every page. The red trail of his atoning blood runs from the beginning to the end of it.

The second book is the New Testament; which agrees in the minutest details and particulars with the prophecies referred to. It chronicles their fulfillment; as claimed, "Thus it is written and thus it must be." The two volumes complement each other in perfect accord like the counterparts of an indenture. Can this be a mere coincidence? Surely not to an unprejudiced mind.

The third book to be consulted is History; the history of the nineteen centuries which have elapsed since the beginning

of the Christian era. In this we find an irrefutable demonstration of the power of Jesus Christ to reconstruct the character of nations and of the children of men. He walks through these centuries like the majestic figure which Isaiah saw on the heights of Bozrah, "marching in the greatness of his strength with dyed garments from Bozrah."

The history of civilization has been coextensive with the influence of the gospel. Not without reason are the enlightened nations of the earth embraced in a charmed circle known as "Christendom"; for there has been no continuous progress save under the luminous shadow of the Cross. Thus does history demonstrate the power of Christ; and thus does it predict His coming also; since all the lines of advancing civilization converge toward "one supreme divine event"; namely, the ultimate reign of the Saviour in the Golden Age, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is the Christ of God.

But this method of approaching the problem, while distinctly rational and scientific, is not ultimately conclusive or satisfactory. In any mind open to conviction it must produce an intellectual apprehension of the fact that Jesus was the veritable Son of God. But this does not go deep enough to affect one's practical life and character. Many a man is convinced of the Godhood of Christ without being a Christian. Orthodoxy is not piety. The truth must take hold not of the intellect only, but of the heart and conscience and will, before our lives can truly be said to be "hid with Christ in God."

The third method is the Empirical or Experimental Method. It is illustrated in the words of the people of Samaria who came to interview Jesus at the suggestion of the woman at the well. She had summoned them to "see a man who had told her all things that ever she did," adding, "Is not this the Christ?" They went out to see for themselves; and after coming into personal touch with Him, they said to her, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world!"

It is this sort of experience with Christ that leads to practical faith in him. "Come and see," said Philip to Na-

thanael: and Nathanael came and saw and believed. Seeing is believing.

It was because Peter had been with Jesus in Hermon, and had seen his earthly garments flutttering aside for a moment to reveal his divine majesty, that he believed in him. Faith came to him then with a certainty that nothing could ever shake, a certainty that deepened and broadened as the years passed on.

No greater mistake can be made than to suppose, as many do, that science rather than faith furnishes a safe working basis of life. This is to confuse science with wisdom and faith with credulity. Natural science has to do with things which are seen and temporal; and it depends for verification upon the evidences of the physical senses. Faith has to do with things which are unseen and eternal: and, so far from being insubstantial or without evidence, it is the very "substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

One of the greatest scientists of the last century, Alfred Russell Wallace, has recently passed away at the extreme age of ninety-one. He shared with Charles Darwin, more than half a century ago, the credit of originating the dogma of Natural Selection as the fundamental fact in the naturalistic theory of Evolution. But as time passed Professor Wallace frankly abandoned the evolution hypothesis as a working basis. He turned from theory and hypothesis to a consideration of the more positive tenets of the spiritual life. He was convinced of "a purpose in creation" and therefore of an "ultimate God," as he expressed it. On this foundation he built for himself a tabernacle of faith, in which he found, what Science could not give, an unwavering hope of life and immortality. His experience in the unseen and eternal was to him more substantial than mere intellectual conclusions could be.

The objective contemplation of any spiritual fact must be meagre in its results, in the necessity of the case. "Experience teaches." The historic council at Nicæa (A. D. 312) was called to formulate the doctrine of the Person of Christ. All manner of heresies had arisen with respect to it. The great majority of those who attended the council believed that he

was very God as he claimed to be; but there were others who affirmed that he was simply the "best of men." For the final adjustment of the controversy delegates were sent from all Christendom; and among them came two from Alexandria, who proved to be the most conspicuous figures in the discussion. One of these was Arius, the father of Unitarianism, that is, the denial of Christ's divinity. The other was Athanasius, a mere stripling of twenty-five years, who soon forged to the front as the defender of the orthodox view.

The question at issue was discussed, *pro* and *contra,* for many weeks, and finally ended in a dramatic incident which the world can never forget. The delegates rose to vote; and among them were many victims of persecution. They had vindicated their loyalty to Christ in prison and torture chambers, had faced all manner of suffering and death itself for the truth's sake. They held up their mutilated hands in vindication of their faith: saying, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which our hands handled, do we certify this day!" Not all the wise arguments of the theologians at Nicæa were so weighty as this testimony of personal experience in the following of Christ. These men had seen the vision in the holy mountain and had heard the Voice out of the most excellent glory, calling, "This is my beloved Son!"

I venture to emphasize again the importance of solving this problem of the Messiah and of solving it in the right way. If Jesus was indeed the veritable Son of God we should know it and act accordingly; for, if so, he alone "hath authority on earth to forgive sins." No prudent man will evade this question or postpone the settlement of it. We have light enough for its solution, if only we will follow it.

The humblest man on earth has free access to the presence of Christ. He claims to be a living Christ and waits to be interviewed. He invites us into the secret place of his pavilion where, if so disposed, we may become personally acquainted with him. No fair-minded man has ever accepted that invitation and failed to arrive at the truth concerning him.

A Jew came to Mr. Moody saying that he sincerely wished to know whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah or not.

The difficulty was that he "could not believe in a Messiah who had died on an accursed tree." Mr. Moody read the conversation of Christ with Nicodemus, in the third of John, and then knelt in prayer. In his prayer he said, "O Lord, this man really wants to know. Show thyself to him as thou didst to Nicodemus! Tell him why thou didst leave the glory which thou hadst with the Father before the world was! Show him the necessity of the cross, on which thou didst pay the ransom for our sins! He believes that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so that whosoever looked might live; show him how thou thyself must even so be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in thee might not perish but have eternal life!" At these words the Jew sprang to his feet, crying, "I see it! I see it! 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness!' The light has come. O blessed Christ of God!"

It is in the light of such an experience as this that the Scriptures become "a word of prophecy made more sure." He who truly believes in Christ will believe also that the Book which was good enough for Christ is good enough for him. And the more he searches that Book, as "a light shining in a dark place," the more sure will it become to him "until the day break and the day-star arise in his heart." Thus is the written word confirmed by personal experience in the love and service of the incarnate Word of God.

VIII

HOW JOHN SAW HIM

THE OLD exile in Patmos is dreaming dreams and seeing visions. In one of these visions he sees an army issuing from the gates of heaven to meet the marshalled hosts of evil. This army is led by one arrayed in garments dipped in blood, whose eyes are as a flaming fire. Who is this?

"And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written which no man knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

The same imposing figure may be seen in the pages of inspired prophecy, going forth conquering and to conquer, on his way to bring deliverance to this sin-stricken world of ours.

In the fulness of time he came riding into Jerusalem, with a multitude going before and coming after, shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" The people of the city, looking from their windows, cried, "Who is this?" and the answer was, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth."

His is the central figure in history. In him concenter all the happenings of time—the past and future meeting in him as at a focal point. He is the Alpha and Omega of chronicles, the beginning and end of all.

In this vision of the Holy War he is seen by the Evangelist going forth to conquest; the knight-errant of truth against error, of good against evil, of right against wrong, of light against darkness.

In the light of this vision all current events find their interpretation; for he who thus, like Henry of Navarre with his white plume, leads the White Battalion to the Holy War, is arbiter of the destinies of nations and of the children of men.

It will be observed that in this apocalyptic vision he is called by four singular names; and in these we shall find the answer to the question, "Who is he?"

One of these names is illegible. "No one knoweth it but he himself." To those who love and follow him, the most familiar of his names is Jesus; but even within that name there are depths of mystery which no intellectual plummet can fathom. How vain the current controversy about "the virgin birth!" Is it not written, "Great is the mystery of godliness—God manifested in the flesh—which things angels desire to look into." But it is also written, elsewhere, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." The name "Jesus" is ours by birthright. In it, as in a golden casket, are the priceless treasures of our spiritual inheritance. "And thou shalt call his name *Jesus;* for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." The aged Christian murmurs it with trembling lips. The little people sing it:

> "There is no name so sweet on earth,
> No name so sweet in heaven;
> The name, before his wondrous birth,
> To Christ the Saviour given."

The last word about Jesus has not been spoken yet. The sweetest of his names cannot reveal the fullness of his infinite excellency to the wisest of finite minds. But the saints triumphant know. So runs the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give . . . a white stone, and upon the stone

a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it." Those who have gone before us to the Heavenly Country have learned the incommunicable Name; for they see no longer "as in a glass darkly," but face to face; and they know no longer "in part," but even as they are known. And to us also this privilege shall be given; for "if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

The second of the names referred to in this vision is *The Faithful and True.*

True to what? And faithful in what? True to the eternal plan and faithful in performing it.

For this Jesus is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In Peter's address to the Jews at Pentecost he spoke of him as "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

I confess to some diffidence in ever approaching the doctrine of the divine Decrees. The fact alone is clear; as to its details and particulars, we may learn a lesson from those fallen angels who are represented in "Paradise Lost" as wandering aimlessly in "the mazes of fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute." It is certain, however, that God has marked out a definite plan for each individual life; and success, in every case, is measured by our compliance with and adjustment to it. But alas, we cross the lines of the divine purpose; we fail because we take issue with God and insist on having our own way.

Not so with Christ. He was eternally elected to do a mighty work. He was foreordained and predestinated to live on earth, to suffer and to die vicariously for men. His path was thus clearly marked out; and he proved himself the perfect Man in never swerving from it. Not an inch, not a hair's breadth, did he swerve from it! The shadow of the cross loomed up at the end of his pathway; and he "set his face steadfastly to go" toward it. He never flinched! He never compromised! His name is deservedly called The True, because he knew the appointed road and went straight on.

And being "true" to prophecy thus far, he will be "faithful" until all shall be fulfilled. Not one jot or tittle of that

which is written shall pass away until all is fulfilled concerning him. Here is the foregleam of his final triumph. The red cross is destined to tower on all the headlands of the earth; and he who is The True and Faithful shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run.

The third of the names of Christ referred to in this vision is *The Word of God.*

Here the dreamer harks back to the Prologue of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

The significance of this title lies in the fact that speech is our common medium of communication. It is through our word, passing from one to another, that we become mutually acquainted. And thus it is that Christ, as the Logos, becomes the full and complete revelation of God. The Incarnation is, so to speak, the articulation of the speech of God. And through it we become acquainted with him; as Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

In Christ we have, in particular, a clear unveiling of the three moral attributes of God:

First, his holiness. Its symbol, in the vision, is the sword proceeding out of his mouth.

By this we are given to understand that God's holiness is not merely negative, that is, freedom from defilement. It is not enough to say that God sits upon his throne, encompassed by angels and archangels crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty!" Nor is it enough to say of Christ that he is "the holy harmless and undefiled One."

His holiness makes itself seen and felt in an unceasing and implacable war upon sin. It is thus that he "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." It is thus that "in righteousness he doth judge and make war." He hates sin with an inextinguishable hatred, by reason of all the evil that has been wrought by it. At the head of his militant host he goes forth against "the beast," until he shall utterly destroy it.

How could it be otherwise? If a vandal had broken into the studio of Phidias and shattered his famous statue of Apollo to atoms, would he have viewed that vandal with complacency, think you? Man is God's masterpiece. Sin, the beast, has discrowned and corrupted him, blinded him to the beauty of spiritual things, polluted his heart, perverted his conscience, enfeebled his intellect and paralyzed his will. It has put a poisoned chalice to his lips, saying, "Drink and die!" And for this reason The Word, as very God of very God, hates sin with all the fury possible to an infinite nature; and he goes forth against it. This is the Holy War. To this end the Captain on his white horse sets out with his White Battalion; and one who reads history aright must see how all events are moving toward the final consummation when the carcass of the beast, as portrayed in the sequel of this vision, shall be given to the fowls of the air to feast on.

So the Word becomes our avenger; as it is written, "I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my wrath it upheld me!" Here is the key to all those passages of Scripture which refer to the divine wrath.

A recent article in one of our Reviews inveighs against "the Old Testament conception of God." There is no such thing as "the Old Testament conception of God." He is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. The New Testament is true to the Old Testament; Christ is the revelation of God as he is and was and ever will be. And throughout the inspired Book he is consistently set forth as the implacable foe of sin. Whatever of wrath or fury or holy indignation there is in his administration of affairs is always against sin; and it is always in the behalf of the children of men.

The second of the moral attributes of God, namely, his justice, is set forth symbolically in the "vesture dipped in blood."

It is a mistake to think of God as always sitting in court and administering on the lives of nations and men. This is only the negative side of his justice. Its positive side is seen most conspicuously at the Cross. For here is where God,

manifest in Christ, vindicates the offended law by paying to the last farthing all that was due to it. The blood on Christ's vesture is his own blood. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by his stripes we might be healed. Oh, stupendous cost of justice! Thus is the question answered, "How shall God be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? And that other question, "How can a man be just with God?" This is the red vintage of our salvation:

> The winepress! The winepress! The voice is from God:
> The floor of his fury is now to be trod;
> The sins of all nations are full to o'erflowing,
> And the blast of th' avenger from heaven is blowing;
> In the red robe of vengeance triumphant he stands,
> And blots out our sentence with blood in his hands.

The third of God's moral attributes, namely, his Goodness, is apparent in the personnel of the army that follows Christ, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. Who are they?

These are the saints triumphant, whom the dreamer saw in a former vision, standing before the Throne, clothed in white robes and with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, "Salvation unto our God!" They are the redeemed in heaven, who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It would be another mistake, however, to think of the redeemed as having nothing to do but to encircle the throne and sing the praises of the Lamb. They go forth to war with him. In that White Battalion are, no doubt, many of our own beloved who have passed on before us. For "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" They have blessed work to do as "laborers together with God." They are enlisted in the Holy War under the Captain of our Salvation in his crusade against the beast. As Havelock went out to the relief of Lucknow, so do the glorified saints march to the deliverance of those who are beleaguered by the hosts of sin.

But the Captain of our Salvation has still another name: "He hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

In this we have the sure token of his power to save. "He

is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him."

But more than this, here is the token of his final triumph. On his head are many crowns or circlets. He is the King of Kings; for the kings of the earth do bring their glory and their honor unto him.

On the lonely island of St. Helena the exiled Napoleon said, "Tell me, Bertrand, how you account for the great abyss between my misery and the eternal reign of Jesus. I am forgotten; so it is with Cæsar and Alexander. Our exploits are given to pupils in school who sit in judgment upon us; but behold the destiny of Christ! His kingdom extends over the whole earth; and there are millions who would die for him." The reason for the difference is plain. The name of Napoleon, "Imperator," was written on a sword-hilt; while the name of this King of Kings was written on his vesture and thigh, as upon an empty scabbard. The swords of Cæsar and Alexander were ever ready for bloody uses; but the sword of Jesus is the pacific speech of Shiloh, Prince of Peace. His right of conquest is not in slaughter, but in self-sacrifice. His ultimate triumph is by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die!
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
Then take, O Christ, thy power and reign!

The crowning day is coming! The dreamer in Patmos saw an angel standing in the sun, calling to the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven to come and feast upon the banquet of slain sin. Then he heard the voice of another angel calling out of heaven, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men: and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God!"

Then the Hallelujah Chorus! All angels and archangels join with the innumerable company of saints redeemed in the shout, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

IX

HOW PAUL SAW HIM

THE most important event, apart from the Atonement, in the opening century of the Christian era, was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. As chief inquisitor of the Sanhedrin he had been the foremost figure in the persecution of the followers of Christ. And this he did with a good conscience: as he says, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." He was acting under the strict compulsion of duty when he "desired letters to the synagogues in Damascus" for the arrest and imprisonment of the Christians there. It was on this journey that the whole tenor of his life and character was changed. "Suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven; and he fell to the earth." A moment later he arose another man. He was so utterly transformed that the things which he had previously loved he now "counted but loss," and the things which he had hated he now loved better than life itself. From that hour he was as zealous in following Christ as he had been in denouncing him and in persecuting those who loved him. By what power was this sudden transformation wrought? There is no effect without a cause. How are we to account for it?

As a citizen of Jerusalem, and probably a member of the Sanhedrin, he must have been familiar with the singular life of Jesus. He had heard the common rumors of his wonderful words and miracles: but he shared in the opinion of his associates that Jesus was an impostor, claiming to be the Messiah but with nothing to support his claim. The power of the wonderful life did not convince him.

He must have been familiar also with the circumstances attending the death of Jesus. It is more than possible that

he had a voice in the Council that passed sentence upon him. To many minds the Cross is the great argument in demonstration of the gospel. The infidel Rousseau confessed that it baffled him: "If Socrates died like a philosopher, then Jesus died like a god!" But Saul of Tarsus was proof against all this. The power of the wonderful death did not convince him.

What, then, was it that turned this man right about face? It was "the power of his resurrection." He had supposed that Jesus was dead and disposed of; but here, on the Damascus highway, a living voice calls, "I am Jesus!" This voice, with the attendant circumstances, carries conviction with it. The conclusion is instant and inevitable: "He whom I supposed to be dead is risen and alive! The story of the resurrection, which his followers have been telling far and wide, is no empty tale!"

Now Saul was distinctly a logician. He was the most distinguished controversialist of his time. He knew the force of an argument when he saw it. To this voice in the sunburst he could find no rational reply but immediate and unconditional surrender: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The power of the wonderful life had been ineffective: the power of the wonderful death had been equally so; but the power of the resurrection of Jesus was sufficient to convert Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle. The thought of the living Christ became, then and there, the dynamic of all his plans and purposes; and, from that hour on the Damascus highway up to the moment when his head fell from the block beneath the walls of Rome, his constant ambition was to live up to it.

Let us inquire as to the significance of this argument, the argument based on the resurrection of Christ as its postulate, which so profoundly influenced the character of this man.

First, it was to his mind a demonstration that Christ, by virtue of his indestructible life, was very God of very God.

The primal attribute of God is self-existence. He is not only the living God; he is the Source and Fountain of life. "In him we live and move and have our being"; but he "sits on no precarious throne nor borrows leave to be." His name,

Jehovah, suggests pure, underived, essential, self-sustaining life. The same truth is involved in the name by which he declared himself at the burning bush, "I AM THAT I AM" or "I am because I am."

Jesus claimed to be the only-begotten Son of God; not created, nor born, but begotten, and therefore partaker of this primal attribute. "In him was life." He said, "I am the life." He also said, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"; in other words life was his in such wise that he could do what he pleased with it. When Pilate said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" his answer was, "Thou wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above." If his life were taken from him it was because he chose to surrender it: and in that case he had "power to take it again." What a stupendous claim! No mortal man could make it. If he could prove that assertion he would vindicate his Godhood. Could he prove it?

It is recorded that when the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate asking that the sepulchre of Jesus might be made sure, "lest haply his disciples come and steal him away," he answered, "Go, make it as sure as ye can." They went accordingly and made the sepulchre sure. They rolled a massive stone before it whereon was affixed the great seal of the Empire, and stationed guards round about to defend it. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! As well might Pilate undertake to imprison the beams of the ascending sun!

As the night wore on the sentinels were pacing to and fro, when suddenly the ground began to tremble. A crash! The rocks were reeling and tottering! A vivid light from heaven! The seal was broken; the stone was rolled away; the guards were lying prostrate as dead men! Then from the shining heights a troop of angels came gliding down and the Prince of Life arose from his tomb, wiping the death-dew from his brow; and the angels thronged his chariot and bore him aloft to the glory that awaited him. Listen! Voices from the distance: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory will come in!"

So Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." He rose not at the behest

of a voice from without but by his own volition. This was the crucial test. Had it failed he would have shown himself, like Samson shorn of his locks, "weak as other men."

A few years ago, when Schliemann was excavating among the ruins of Mycenæ, he came upon the tomb of Agamemnon, known as "the King of Men." There were three swords, a dented shield, and a golden mask; all else was dust! Had the body of Jesus returned in like manner to its elemental dust, his boasted sovereignty of life would have vanished into thin air. But the grave could not confine him. To the mind of Saul of Tarsus this power of an underived and indestructible life verified his claim as very God of very God.

Second, by the power of his resurrection it was made clear that Jesus was able to bestow spiritual life.

We are smitten unto death by the power of sin. For "there is no distinction; for all have sinned"; and the sentence of the law is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." The death here indicated is alienation from God. It is impossible to imagine a hell deeper than this; to be for ever away from God!

"There is a death whose pang
Outlives this fleeting breath;
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!"

But Jesus claimed that he had power to restore life to those who were thus "dead in trespasses and sins." He said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." The life to which he referred was restoration to the favor of God. This could only be effected by a deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. This was accomplished by Christ who "his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree," and whose "blood cleanseth us from all sin." He said, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Could he prove it?

All the miracles of Jesus are directed to the demonstration of that claim. It was a matter of comparatively small import that he should heal a few blind men and lepers in a world full of lepers and blind men: but it was a matter of vast importance that by opening blind eyes he should demonstrate his power to purge our spiritual vision, and that by wiping away

the leper's spots he should demonstrate his ability to cleanse the soul. Now his resurrection was simply the culmination of all his miracles. It proved not only that he was the self-existent God, but that he was also the "quickening Spirit"; able to restore spiritual life to those who were "dead under the law." Wherefore it is written, "You did he make alive when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins"; and again, "God made us alive together with Christ and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The key to the mystery of regeneration is in this electric touch of Christ as the quickening Spirit, by whom we receive the joy of pardon, the peace of a good conscience and restoration to the complacent love of God. Thus is the saying of Christ fulfilled, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

Third, the power of the resurrection of Christ is an unanswerable argument as to his ability to confer eternal life on those who believe in him.

Eternal life does not mean immortality. Our perpetual existence is a fact, whether or no we desire it. The breath in our nostrils is God's breath; and there is nothing in the universe that can quench it. We are bound to live forever, somewhere. But that is not what is meant by eternal life. It means an unending existence in communion with God, in perfect harmony with all his plans and purposes concerning us, and in happy obedience to his holy will.

All are to rise in the general resurrection; but "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The dead in Christ shall rise first; and shall hear his voice saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is "the resurrection of the just," of which it is written, "Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection!" All true believers, who have suffered with Christ, shall then reign with him. For "if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." And again, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is."

Our Lord claimed the power to confer this eternal life: "This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Here is another and equally stupendous claim. Could he prove it?

The ultimate proof awaits the "consummation of all things." It would appear, however, that the argument which has been so irresistible thus far shall not fail in that day. As to our loved ones who are fallen asleep, we do not mourn for them as others who are without hope; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He who came forth from the sepulchre as "the first born from the dead" will not forget his kinsfolk. His resurrection as "the firstfruits of them that sleep" is an earnest and prophecy of our resurrection. As the first sheaf of wheat was waved before the altar in prediction of the coming harvest, so is the risen Christ our assurance that God's Acre shall be garnered in the great day.

It is not to be wondered at that the argument thus presented to the mind of Saul of Tarsus was conclusive. The fact that Christ had conquered death was a vindication of all his mighty claims. The faith which emerged from the experience of that memorable day was never shaken. It rings with a triumphant note of certainty in the resurrection hymn: "I make known unto you the gospel: . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried and that he hath been raised on the third day. . . . How then say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain: your faith also is vain. . . . Ye are yet in your sins! Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished! If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that are asleep. . . . . Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is

sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Oh for Paul's vision of the living Christ! I have read the legend of a monk who stood weeping under his crucifix, weary of penance, when suddenly his Lord appeared saying, "Weep not for me nor for thyself. Because I live, thou livest also. Hear thou the call for help! The world needs thee. Go forth to thy duty; and I will ever be with thee." It was the very voice that Saul of Tarsus heard on the highway: and it speaks in like manner to us.

There is only one answer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "If ye then were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God." He is a living, loving friend, and never far from every one of us.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

X

HOW PILATE SAW HIM

Look well at this man: for he saw Jesus, knew who he was, trembled at his gaze and still rejected him!

It would be hard to find a more striking contrast than was witnessed in the Judgment Hall. Pilate sat on an ivory throne, clothed in purple, his famous ruby blazing in his turban: while Jesus stood in the prisoner's box, pale, worn with a night of weary vigils, and bearing the scars of a whip of scorpions.

And Pilate said, "Behold the man!" No need to say it. We cannot avoid beholding him. He stands perpetually at Gabbatha, demanding, "What think ye of me?" Listen, and you will hear the world talking about him. Turn to the oracles, and lo, from every page his face, marred but divinely beautiful, looks out upon you. Open your newspaper, and mark his influence upon current events. "Behold the man!" He is the commanding figure in the record of nations and the children of men.

And observe the "fan in his hand," with which he ever purges his floor. He draws a line through the midst of the people, setting them apart, believers on one side and non-believers on the other, saying, "He that is not with me is against me." No, we cannot avoid him. We are bound to decide for or against him. And every hour is the hour of decision. His eyes are like those in Domenichino's portrait; wherever we go they follow us.

But just now it is with the other man that we have to do—Pilate, the pilloried coward. *Ecce homo!* Behold that man!—the truckler, the compromiser, the man who knew his duty and did it not.

Who was he? In early life he went to war and distinguished himself on the field of battle. He then entered politics, and by rapid steps of promotion rose to be the Governor of Judæa. His headquarters were now in the Roman capital at Cæsarea; but he had recently come up to Jerusalem to preserve order during the Passover, because the Jews were proverbially a turbulent race. He was in charge of the garrison at the Castle of Antonia, where doubtless he kept well indoors, being the best hated man in the country. Not long before this he had built an aqueduct and paid for it out of Corban, the sacred treasury of Israel. A little later he set up a Roman standard in Jerusalem on which was the name of the emperor, to which divine honors were paid; and when the Jews rebelled and beset the governor's gates, he recalled the idolatrous symbol, allowing them to have their way. It was only recently that a band of Galilean peasants were worshiping at the altar, when Pilate, having an accusation against them, sent a detachment of Roman troops and "mingled their blood with their sacrifices." No wonder the Jews hated and gnashed their teeth at him!

But just now they had need of this man. As a subjugated people they had lost the power of life and death. In order to crucify Christ they must have the governor's approval. So on the morning of this April day he was awakened bright and early by their beating at his gates. No doubt he arose from his couch with reluctance and muttering maledictions on these malcontents. Seeing their prisoner, he demanded of them, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" All night in the Sanhedrin they had sat in judgment on this prisoner, the charge being blasphemy, in that, claiming to be the Messiah, he "made himself equal with God." But as no Roman magistrate would take cognizance of religious matters they must needs trump up a new indictment. It was practically a charge of rebellion in three specifications: First, he had "perverted the nation." Second, he had forbidden the payment of tribute to Cæsar. And, third, he had proclaimed himself a king. This was the case on which Pilate must determine; and there was no escape from it.

Pilate knew about Christ. No one could be living in Jerusalem at that time without knowing about him. His wonderful

words and works were in the air. And besides, Pilate had just had a personal interview with him, in which he asked, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" to which Jesus answered, "Thou sayest. . . . My kingdom is not of this world. . . . To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." So, being fully informed as to his prisoner, the question was, what should he do with him?

Pilate was fully persuaded as to the character of Christ. This was evidenced in his statement, "I find no fault in this man." It is a singular fact that even the enemies of Jesus have been always united in bearing this testimony. He himself had uttered the challenge, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" Who, indeed? Not his friends, who believe him to be chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Not his enemies, for never have nobler eulogiums been passed upon him than by such infidels as Lucian, Porphyry, Spinoza, Rousseau, Goethe, David Strauss, Theodore Parker and Renan. All are agreed that he was the Blameless One.

Pilate had been warned concerning him. Not only had his conscience rung the alarm—as conscience is ever "accusing or else excusing" us—but he had received a special admonition. His wife Procula had dreamed in the waking hours of the morning—the hour when it was popularly supposed all dreams came true—and tradition gives her dream. She saw a conflagration consuming temples and palaces, licking up forests and burning the heavens like a parched scroll, so that nothing could extinguish it. There were cries of the homeless and fear-stricken. Thereupon a lamb appeared, and as it mounted the flaming pyre its side was pierced, blood gushed forth, and the fires were quenched. Then the lamb assumed a human form, the appearance, as the dreamer said,

> "Of a man divine and passing fair,
> And like your august prisoner there."

Wherefore she said, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man!"

Pilate's cowardice was aggravated by his repeated attempts at evasion. He made seven appeals, in his desperate effort to shift the responsibility of passing judgment on Christ. His

first was to the prisoner himself: "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" And Jesus answered never a word, insomuch that the governor marveled greatly. He was probably not aware of the prophecy which had been written concerning him, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

His second appeal was to the religious leaders: "I, having examined him before you, found no fault in him touching those things whereof ye accuse him." Their reply was simply a more vehement outburst against him.

His third appeal was to the mob. It would have been as well to sing a lullaby to a cyclone; they cried the more loudly, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

His fourth appeal was to diplomacy. At this time Herod the Tetrarch happened to be on a visit to Jerusalem; and it occurred to Pilate that the case of his prisoner, who was a Galilean, fell properly within his colleague's jurisdiction. A happy thought! He straightway sent him to Herod. But the Galilean tetrarch returned the prisoner with his compliments, being too old a schemer to be caught that way. In point of fact no man can evade the responsibility of passing personal judgment on Christ. Herod always sends him back.

The fifth appeal of Pilate was to custom. A prisoner was usually released at the time of the Passover. The governor now gave the people an alternative between Jesus and Barabbas, who was a notorious thief and murderer. To his dismay they demanded the release of Barabbas! "What then shall I do unto Jesus, who is called the Christ?" he inquired. "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

His sixth appeal was to compromise. "I will chastise him," he said, "and release him." Shame upon him for a Roman magistrate! His prisoner was either innocent or guilty; if guilty, let him suffer the just penalty; if innocent, set him free! Compromise never pays. "Nothing is settled until it is settled right." No man or church can "split the difference" in moral or spiritual things.

The seventh and last appeal was to his own accusing conscience. He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous

man; see ye to it." Shakespeare probably caught from this tragic incident his thought of Macbeth's remorse:

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

The question arises, How did Pilate descend so low in cowardice? In all probability it began with trifling in religious things. He lived in an age of cynicism, when the foundations of religion were broken up. It may be that, mingling with the soldiers at the camp-fire, he had made sport of the gods; and the habit grew upon him until, facing the great problem, he curled his lip in the satirical question, "What is truth?"

In addition to this he was constitutionally a truckler. If he had convictions he was ever ready to waive them in deference to public opinion. Just here is the test of moral heroism. There is many a man who, like Pilate, has distinguished himself on the high places of the field, who finds himself unable to face a pointed finger.

Still further, Pilate was a sycophant. As an office-holder, he knew himself to be in the line of promotion and must do nothing to forfeit his chance. The people touched the raw spot when they said, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." The Cæsar at that time was Tiberius, a jealous tyrant who owned his subordinates, body and soul. It would be bad policy for Pilate to offend him.

What was the result? Tiberius was presently off the throne and Caligula was in power. Pilate was summoned before him to answer to certain charges of malfeasance in office; and a little later he found himself an exile and wanderer in Gaul. He ended his life at Lake Lucerne, where the peasants say that once a year a spectre rises from the water, wringing its hands in impotent despair.

"By God abhorred, by man despised,
Shunned by the fiends below,
Where shall the wretch, to hide himself
And hide his meanness, go?"

But let us not be too severe in our judgment of Pilate. Rather, let him that is without sin cast the first stone at him.

There stands Jesus at Gabbatha; and the demand is upon us, What shall we do with him? Will we also chastise him and let him go? Will we send him to Herod? Nay; he will evermore return to us! Shall we praise him in mock heroics, and, while admiring his splendid character, reject his divine claims? From the dishonesty of mere sentiment, good Lord, deliver us! The most despicable thing that ever was said about Jesus was "Behold the man!" Let us be logical and say again that Christ was what he claimed to be or else an impostor who deserved the death that befell him. There is no middle ground. He either bore our sins in his own body on the tree, or else the Christian world for nineteen centuries has been under a delusion respecting him.

XI

LOOK AROUND YOU

THERE were two strings to Paul's harp. One of them sounded the story of his conversion; the other "This Jesus is the Christ." In the synagogue at Thessalonica he is said to have reasoned with the Jews on three successive Sabbaths, "opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ (that is, the Messiah) to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I proclaim unto you is the Christ."

I imagine him with the scrolls of scripture in his hands thus "opening and alleging" that Jesus of Nazareth whom they with wicked hands had crucified was really their Messiah, "whom kings and prophets longed to see and died without the sight."

Paul was a great master of dialectics and a biblical expert as well; but the task before him was no easy one. His hearers believed in the scriptures and they also believed in the Messiah; but they did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. The odds were greatly against Paul in his effort to convince them, because it was only twenty years before that their religious leaders had hung this same Jesus on an accursed tree. Was that a frightful mistake? Or, if so, was it to be expected that they would acknowledge it?

The apostle's mode of procedure on this occasion was to open the Scriptures and show how precisely Jesus corresponded with the silhouette which the prophets had drawn. It was a wise method, and should have been satisfactory to all. No unbiased reader of the Old Testament can fail to perceive the correspondence referred to. It is so exact in the minutest details and particulars relating to His birth, His character, His

preaching, His miracles, His death and His resurrection, that it is difficult to escape the force of it.

Let us, however, pursue a different line of argument. A good many people in our time reject the Scriptures altogther as ultimate authority for anything, while others know little about them and some care less. It is safe to say, nevertheless, that even these are interested in the question whether Jesus is the Christ or not. It is for their benefit that the argument is now presented from another point of view.

We are living nineteen centuries away from the Messianic drama. Meanwhile the world has been moving and there are existing facts which need to be accounted for; and these facts are such, in my opinion, that they can only be accounted for on the assumption that Jesus of Nazareth was what He claimed to be.

To begin with, take *the dynamic truths* which are now prevalent and uppermost in the religious thought of the whole civilized world.

First, there is the Doctrine of God. It is agreed on all hands that "God is Love." We are so familiar with the phrase that we accept it as a matter of course. In fact, however, it is peculiar to those Christian nations over whom has fallen the blessing of the wonderful words of Jesus, "When ye pray say, Our Father." It is not claimed, nor is it necessary for the argument in hand to affirm, that Jesus originated this conception of God. Let it suffice to say that he emphasized it, and that it prevails in Christendom and nowhere else.

The second of the prevalent thoughts is that man is the wayward child of God. All are agreed, whether Christians or not, that there is something divine in man and that something has gone wrong with him. To put it in Christian phrase, he was created in the divine likeness but has fallen from his high estate; so that "there is none that doeth good, no not one." Here again it is not necessary to affirm that Jesus originated either the doctrine of the divine origin of man or the doctrine of the fall. We say merely that this was the conception of man set forth constantly in the preaching of Christ and that it is universally accepted in the civilized world to-day.

The third of the generally accepted truths is that no effective

plan has been devised for reconciling a sinful man with a holy God by the blotting out of past sin *unless it can be found in the atonement of Christ.* In all the sacred books of the false religions there is no intimation of any such plan. In the teaching of Christ we are advised that he "tasted death for every man," so that whosoever believeth in Him should have eternal life. All men do not accept that suggestion; but all practically agree that there is no other way; which is precisely what he said: "No one cometh unto the Father but by me."

It thus appears that the three salient truths that were presented in the teachings of Jesus—as to God, man and reconciliation with God—are the three potent conceptions in the religious thought of the world to-day. In other words, he of whom it was said, "Never man spake like this man," has in the logic of events come to be the supreme teacher of religion, even among those who do not concede his Messianic claims. This is a marvelous thing and surely worthy of consideration. How can it be accounted for?

We turn now to *the moral principles* which prevail among the civilized people of the world. All these center in the Decalogue. It is not claimed that Jesus made any revolutionary change in the Ten Commandments, or even that they are peculiar to the Word of God. On the other hand, the moral principles which they formulate are in the nature of a generic intuition, having been written in the nerve and sinew of the human constitution before they were inscribed on tables of stone. But Jesus charged those Commandments with a practical significance such as they never had before; and his interpretation of the Decalogue is now accepted by all.

First, he simplified them by reducing them to a brief summary, as follows: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," or, more briefly still, as Paul puts it, "Love is the fulfilment of the law."

Second, he analyzed them, going beneath the surface and placing the motive behind the overt act. This analysis is now recognized in every court of justice. Listen to this: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you that every one who is angry with his brother

shall be in danger of the judgment. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you that the offence is committed in an unclean glance! Wherefore, if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out; and if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee." In such teaching as this the law becomes "quick and powerful even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow," and is seen to be "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Third, he gave the Moral Law a personal application which it never had before. He yoked up precept with practice when he said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is no uncommon thing in the Orient to find a very devout Hindu or Mohammedan who is nevertheless a notoriously wicked man; but under the teaching of Christ it has come to be understood that faith and conduct must go with even pace. Here are some words that have come ringing down through the centuries: "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Now this interpretation of the Ten Commandments is accepted by the civilized world. The very criticisms which are directed at Christians for not living up to their profession are a splendid tribute to Christ as a moral teacher. In charging them with inconsistency these critics allow that he was the teacher of a consistent faith. Thus they magnify the significance of his ethics. Can this be said of any other of the great moralists? Has Seneca, or Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius left such an impression on the minds of nations and the children of men? How shall we explain it?

Let us now take *the miracles of Jesus.* I do not mean the miracles of healing which he wrought during his ministry. Great was their evidential value; but there are other and more wonderful miracles which this same Jesus is working now.

First, the miracle of Regeneration. Nicodemus was greatly puzzled when Jesus said, "Except a man he born anew he can-

not see the kingdom of God"; but his amazement was quite uncalled for. Regeneration is one of the common miracles, occurring constantly, all about us. Go down to Cremorne Mission and you shall see a man who was a reeling drunkard not long ago; he rises, clothed in his right mind, and says, "I have found Jesus which is called the Christ." Go down to any of our Midnight Missions and you shall see a woman, who until recently was a common drab, rejoicing in peace and self-respect; and she will tell you that Jesus has done it. This is a miracle more wonderful than the opening of blind eyes or the wiping away of lepers' spots. And thousands of such miracles are being wrought, in Jesus' name, every day.

It is related that Napoleon once said to the members of his old guard, who were discussing the question before us, "Do you mean to tell me that a dead man could reach a dead hand across these eighteen hundred years and demand the surrender of a human heart and get it?"

Second, the miracle of Sanctification. Those who have been converted in the name of Jesus proceed at once to the building of character: and this they do by imitating him. The glory of his gospel is that it makes men like our Christian fathers, and women like our Christian mothers, who have lived in grace and died without fear. Were they perfect? By no means; but they were sincerely trying to be.

The third miracle is Philanthropy. The great enterprises which make for the betterment of humanity are practically confined to those nations which are under the luminous shadow of the Cross. We do not look for hospitals, asylums or reformatories anywhere else. The Church itself is a great philanthropy. Let me enter here, as documentary evidence in this case, a book called "The Charities Directory of New York City." Here are more than eleven thousand organizations designed for the relief of the poor and needy. By whom are they sustained and carried on? Look for yourself. They are almost without exception under the substantial patronage of religious bodies. Let those who criticise the Church reflect upon this fact. I grant you, the Church is not what it should be; but it has more charitable strength in its little finger than all its cavilling critics have in their loins.

The fourth miracle is Progress—the greatest miracle of all. Take a map of the world and draw a line around all civilized lands. What have you done? You have outlined "Christendom." The name is significant. It means that civilization and evangelization have been practically identical. The progress of the centuries has been in the name of Jesus. The moral forces which he set in motion have been at work like leaven, leavening the lump. Call the roll of the nations: Christian Italy! Christian Germany! Christian France! Christian Russia! Christian Austria! Christian England! Christian America! And pause a moment before you say, "Christian China"; for China, with her six hundred millions even now, as she emerges from barbaric night, is turning her eyes with uncertain but pathetic longing toward the Cross. Can you account for this? Can you explain Christendom? We do not have to explain it. This Jesus is the Christ! He came into the world to establish a kingdom of truth and righteousness; and he is here personally to see that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Let us turn to another fact in the circumstances of our time which is still more difficult to account for; namely, *the personal presence of Jesus* in the world.

This is claimed to be a real presence; no less real, no less living, no less energetic than when he was visibly dwelling among men. His promise to his disciples was, "I will not leave you. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Is that promise fulfilled? The other mighties of the past have lived, served their generations, died and left nothing but dust and a memory behind them. Not so with Jesus. There are some hundreds of millions of people in the world who will tell you that they constantly walk and talk with him. And these witnesses are of such a character that their testimony cannot be ruled out of court. A derisive smile or a lifting of one's eyebrows will not answer it.

Moreover, it is claimed that Jesus, thus personally present with his people, is the only perfect One. Along with a confession of the sinfulness of all others, there is a singular unanimity—notwithstanding the fiercest scrutiny and the most unsparing criticism—as to the sinlessness of Christ. The judg-

ment that was passed upon him by the man who sentenced him to death is echoed by the world to-day, "I find no fault in this Man!"

Still further, this Jesus is the colossal figure, not only in the history of the past nineteen centuries, but in current events. He stands in solitary majesty as the mightiest of the mighty. He leads the van of every praiseworthy enterprise in the world. We are reminded of what Charles Lamb once said of Him, during a discussion as to the relative influence of Jesus and other historic leaders, "Gentlemen, if Shakespeare were to come in among us, we would rise and uncover; but if Jesus were to enter, we would with one consent fall upon our knees before him." This is true. The foremost man of our time would not presume to say that he is worthy to unloose the latchet of the shoes of this Jesus which is called the Christ.

The argument which I have thus presented has been without reference to the Scriptures in any way; but the time has now come to take down the old Book, in order to confirm it. If our minds are open to conviction, we shall be able to follow the prophecies from Genesis to Malachi, after the manner of Paul, and see the face of Jesus shining forth on every page and his name written between all the lines. It will now be a different Book, because we shall read it with different eyes.

An Oriental weaver, who had made an elaborate piece of tapestry, stretched it on tenter-hooks in his yard. That night it was stolen. The officers found a fabric which seemed to answer the description, but as the pattern was not unlike that of others there must be definite proof. Accordingly it was brought to the weaver's yard; and there the perforations in the fabric were found to correspond exactly to the tenter-hooks. This was demonstration. In like manner the life and character of Jesus are placed over against the prophecies of the Holy Writ and found to correspond point by point. The conclusion would seem to be inevitable. This Jesus is the Christ.

It is painful to be an "honest doubter," for while infidelity rests in unbelief, honest doubt ever agonizes toward the light. The Pilgrims on their way to the Celestial City were given over to despondency when they found themselves in Doubting

Castle. They had been beaten by Giant Despair with a crab-tree cudgel and feared lest the Lord had forgotten them. On Saturday about midnight they began to pray, and continued thus until almost the breaking of day. Then Christian, as one amazed, broke out into this passionate speech: "What a fool am I, to thus lie in a dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Hopeful said, "This is good news, my brother; pluck it out of thy bosom and try." And, as he turned the key in door after door, they flew open with ease and Christian and Hopeful came forth into the light of day.

A willingness to believe—not blind credulity, but a simple rational faith, a faith founded on evidence and backed by the authority of Scripture—is the key which will solve the honest doubt of every thinking man. Have you been questioning as to whether or no this Jesus is the Christ? Pluck the key out of your bosom and try!

XII

SEE HIM AT YOUR DOOR

If you knew a stranger was knocking at your door just now what would you do about it? In common courtesy you would inquire as to his errand, and, if well disposed, you would admit him.

The Saviour stands knocking at the door of every heart, saying, "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." Look out of your window and you shall see him. What will you do about it?

In Holman Hunt's picture, "The Light of the World," the patient Christ is represented waiting thus before a closed door, his locks wet with the dews of night. A little child who saw this picture looked at it long and earnestly and then, turning to her father, asked with a pathetic tremor in her voice, "Did he get in, father; did he get in?"

All the world knows how Henry the Fourth of Germany, the proudest sovereign of his time, was brought to his knees by the Pope's anathema; so that, having crossed the mountains in the dead of winter and presented himself at Canossa as a suppliant in sackcloth, he was kept waiting three days and nights at the closed door of the so-called Vicar of God. Volumes have been written about that visit, because it determined the policy of empires; but here is a visit, told in a single sentence, which is fraught with greater interest, forasmuch as the issues of eternal life and death are involved in it.

This august visitor comes *to let us know that he has not forgotten us.* "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea,

she may forget; yet will I not forget thee." How can he forget us, when our names are written on the palms of his hands? It is not because of any personal merit that we are thus remembered, nor because of anything we have ever done for him; but rather on account of what he has done for us. Is this singular? Love is oftentimes engendered by benefits conferred where there are no benefits received. In a letter written by Captain Marryat to his mother, when he was a midshipman in the English Navy, he speaks of a sailor who had provoked his bitter resentment by inflicting petty wrongs and affronts upon him. The time came, however, when that sailor fell overboard and was rescued by the young midshipman: and then he wrote his mother again, telling of this occurrence and saying, "I do not understand why this should be; but I never in my life loved another as I love this man." So the love of Christ is grounded in itself: he loves us because he gave himself for us. Wherefore he has written our names as a perpetual memorial on his wounded hands, so that he can never forget us.

He comes, also, *to reprove us of sin.* It is true that of reprovers there is no lack: but there is none like him. We are compassed about by witnesses who look askance at our shortcomings and point their fingers at us. We need no monitors to cry "Aha! aha!" The most lynx-eyed of critics is not more aware of our backslidings than we are. But Christ's reproof is not like theirs. On the night before his crucifixion, when he stood before Pilate as a prisoner at the bar, he was thrice denied by Peter, who was warming his hands at a fire in the open court near by. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter: . . . and he went out and wept bitterly." Oh, that loving, heart-breaking look! No fault-finder in the world looks at us that way. It is as if he said, "Is this thy gratitude for all that I have done for thee?" The only answer is to cry, "Sorrie I am, my Lord; sorrie I am!" And the evidence of that true repentance which needeth not to be repented of is not only to weep bitterly, but to forsake our besetting sins.

He comes, again, *to assure us of his pardoning grace.* When he met Peter on the lakeshore, not long after the denial, and asked, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" Peter

answered, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." There were whole volumes of tender mercies in those words. It was as if he had said, "Let the dead past bury its dead; the future calls thee!"

So in the reproof of the Saviour there is always a promise of better things. I am like a boy at school with a slate before me, trying with knit brows to do a difficult sum in addition. The Master asks, "How are you getting on?" I tearfully show him my slate full of errors, saying "It's all wrong; what shall I do?" He rubs it out and says, "Don't be discouraged: try again." Blessed be his name for the provision which he has made for blotting out our sins! And blessed be his name for that "Try again!" He is not "a hard man." He does not "break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax." He does not cherish the memory of our past misdeeds but "casts them behind his back" and promises to remember them no more against us. Let us take him at his word and start afresh. This is the secret of the Christian life, to "forget the steps already trod and onward urge our way."

He comes, moreover, *to renew his covenant with us.* What is that covenant? "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." It takes two to make a covenant. "The party of the first part" offers the crown; but "the party of the second part" must so run as to obtain it. And when Christ asks us to renew our covenant with him, he offers therewith all the strength and courage and equipment necessary to the keeping of it. He brings our armor with the call to battle: the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. And having thus harnessed us for all the trials and responsibilities of life, he bids us "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." If we fail, under such circumstances, it is not his fault but ours; for we can do all things in him that strengtheneth us.

He comes, still further, *to manifest his presence:* as he said, "If a man love me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him and make our abode

with him." Here is a promise of companionship all along the way. It has one condition affixed to it, namely, "If a man love me." A great "if" with immeasurable hopes and disappointments flowing out of it! Could we but realize his constant presence what Christians we would be! It is never I alone who address myself to an appointed task; but Christ and I. It is never I alone who lift the burden of trial and sorrow; but Christ and I. It is never I alone who confront the adversary in the close grapple of temptation: but always Christ and I. Say not, "Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down?" or "Who shall descend into the abyss to bring him up?" O dearest Friend, closest of companions, thou art ever beside us!

It is thus that Jesus visits us, knocking and pleading to come in. His arms are laden with loving kindnesses. He wants nothing but to make our life worth living and heaven worth striving for. Shall he enter? Not unless we open the door. Shall we let him in?

A man's heart is his castle. Reason and Will are two mighty bolts by which it is fastened even against God. He addresses himself to the reason, saying, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." But suppose our intellectual powers are convinced, what then? Though the upper bolt be drawn, the lower bolt holds fast. We may yield a mental assent to all the arguments and entreaties of divine grace and yet be unreconciled with God: for, in the last reduction, the stubborn will must yield or God cannot come in. There lies the trouble. "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life."

It is difficult to imagine how God could have created a man in his own likeness and after his image without endowing him with a sovereign will. He might have made a graven image or a mannikin; but this would not have been a child of God. It is obvious that the possession of a sovereign will carries with it the power of disobedience. In this we are differentiated from all the lower orders of life. The stars of heaven obey God. The fowls of the air and the beasts of the forest and the fishes of the sea all yield to his behest; but man

has the power to say, "I will not." It thus appears that the token of our divine birthright is the danger signal of our destiny. The same endowment that brings us into filial relation with the Father involves the possibility of an awful revolt and infinite departure from him. If, therefore, God would have access to my soul he must stand there and knock and abide my decision. It is written of him that he will not "turn aside the right of a man." If he draw me, he must draw me with "the cords of a man."

But why should the man in the closed house—a sinner, eating his heart out with shame and misgiving—refuse to admit the gracious Son of God? Oh, surely there must be some misunderstanding here! He comes to sup with us! The feasts of Vitellius have gone into history. It was not an uncommon thing for him to spend on a single banquet the revenues of an entire province. His table was furnished with lampreys from distant seas, with nightingales' tongues and peacocks' brains and all manner of rare delicacies. Those were famous feasts; but they were nothing to those which the Son of Man proposes to furnish for the delectation of all who will open unto him. Here is water from the King's well, wine from the King's vineyard, apples and pomengranates from the King's orchard. Here is the joy of pardon, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Here is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Here is "the hope that maketh not ashamed." Here are all the consolations of the heavenly grace; and here is the benignant presence of the King of Kings shining like a benediction upon all.

But what a wonder is here: "*If* any man will open unto me!" Who shall explain that if? In one of Doctor Arnot's letters he says that, hearing of the distress of a poor widow who was to be evicted for non-payment of rent, he took with him one evening a sum of money and knocked at her door. He thought he heard a sound of shuffling feet and a turning of the window blind, but, as his repeated knockings were unanswered, he went his way. The next morning he came again, and, on his mentioning his previous visit, the woman cried, "Oh, minister, was that you? I heard the knock; but I supposed it was my landlord coming to dispossess me." Did we

but know the goodness in the heart of Him who stands waiting at our door we surely would not exclude him. It is written, "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him." Salvation is the gift he brings us. Why then this attitude toward Him?

Hark! The voice is pleading still: "Behold, I stand and knock; if thou wilt open unto me I will come in and sup with thee."

Knocking, knocking; what, still there?
Waiting, waiting, grand and fair!
Yes, the piercèd hand still knocketh;
And, beneath the crownèd hair,
Beam the patient eyes so tender
Of thy Saviour waiting there.

What say you? Let gratitude unbolt the door. Let love cry, "Welcome, thou kindest of friends, thou most sovereign of kings, thou only Saviour! come in and sup with me!"

CONCLUSION

WE HAVE seen him. The question now is, "What shall we do with this Jesus which is called the Christ?"

There he stands! You and I and each for himself must say whether he shall be our Christ or not. It is cowardice to be convinced of the truth and still unwilling to close in with it. Postponement is rejection. Not to decide is to decide not. Opportunity is responsibility: and opportunity is here and now.

To hide our faces from him is the only unpardonable sin: unpardonable in the necessity of the case, because it closes the only door that has ever been opened out of sin into salvation. To accept him is to lay everything at his feet and to knit our destiny with his in spiritual and eternal life.

And what then? Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which await us! "Now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is,"

AFTERWORD.

THE reader will perhaps remember the words with which this volume opened:

This little book is dedicated
To My Friend.

I met him for the first time on an October evening in 1856. This is the fifty-eighth anniversary of our acquaintance. It would appear that I have known him long enough to prove him. I have summered and wintered with him. I have been with him at the cross-roads of conduct and he has always pointed out the right way. I have been with him in the Valley of Baca, and he has given me good cheer. I have been with him in the Mount of Transfiguration and seen his face shining as the sun shineth in its strength. I have been with him in bright and dark days, in evil and good report, and he has never failed me yet. And I expect to go with him presently through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and I am confident that there his rod and his staff will comfort me.

I had known about him before that October day; but we were not on what would be called intimate terms; indeed, we were scarcely speaking acquaintances. I had read of him, had heard him spoken of in the village church and in the family circle; but he had seemed to me as "a root out of a dry ground," and when I casually saw him there was no form nor comeliness in him that I should desire. What led me to change my mind? I scarcely know. It was as if a veil were lifted. So that when I saw him that October day he seemed to me the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Oh happy day!

And we have walked together pleasantly ever since. Not that we have never disagreed; but the fault has always been with me. And now that fifty-eight years have passed, I am prepared to say that there has never been a moment when I would willingly have parted company with him. He has never wronged me; never deceived me; never failed me. He has been as true as steel. When I have stumbled he has helped me up; when I have been perplexed he has counseled me. He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. I only wish that everybody knew him!

Go with me and I will introduce you. He is to be found in a quiet trysting-place that I know of. You will be expected: for I have already spoken to him about the matter; and he said, "Bring him to me." There will be no need of knocking. Go right in; you will find him waiting for you. I will remain without, however, lest I intrude. But before you cross the threshold let me advise you as to what you are about to see.

To begin with, *you will find him a man;* a man in all points such as you are.

He has been painted by the old masters with a halo encircling his head; do not look for anything of the sort. You will be more likely to find him in homespun; his hands marked with the callous ridges of toil. For he is an average man; a man of the people, knowing what it is to be weary at the day's close. He will not address you in the terminology of the schools; but will show himself possessed of great common sense. His usual greeting is, "Come, now, and let us reason together." He is familiar with all the thoroughfares of human experience, and can, therefore, be touched with a feeling of your infirmities. You will find him a man of deep sympathy, a very human man.

But you will discover that *he is a singular man* in some ways; particularly in this, that he is without sin.

The world has never seen another such. We have known men without eyes, without hands, without feet; but never a man without sin. "For there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God": that is, all except this friend of mine. He has been in all points tempted like

as we are, yet without sin. He never did a wrong act; never spoke a wrong word; never had a wrong thought. He is negatively perfect, in that he never broke the law. He is positively perfect, in that he has obeyed the law even to the last jot and tittle of it. His life is recorded in this brief monograph, "He went about doing good." He did good always as he had opportunity unto all men.

He once issued a challenge on this wise: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" It would have been infinite presumption in any other man to speak that way. His challenge was accepted; he was arrested, haled to court and put through "the third degree," and when the case was concluded, the presiding judge summed up the evidence in these memorable words: "Behold the man! . . . I find no fault in him." The united testimony of the world for nineteen centuries has been an echo of those words. All the searchlights of history have been turned upon my friend, and no flaw has been found in the harness of his righteousness. There are spots on the noonday sun; but there is not a fleck discernible in the character of this man. He stands solitary and alone, as the one perfect, incomparable, unaccountable man.

You will find him, furthermore, claiming to be *the Son of God.*

Now, there is a sense in which we are all sons of God. We are his sons by creation: as it is written, "God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him." Some are sons of God by adoption: as it is written, "We have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" But this friend of mine is God's Son not by creation, for he never was created; nor by adoption, for he never was adopted; but by an eternal begetting. He stands alone and solitary as "the only-begotten Son."

He is the pre-existent Son. He speaks of "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." Our life had a beginning: his never. From everlasting to everlasting he is God's only-begotten Son.

He is the co-equal Son. He arrogates to himself every one of the divine attributes. He claims omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. He was charged by his accusers with blas-

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phemy, in that "he made himself equal with God." The charge of blasphemy was false; but the specifications were true. There is no question as to his claim; and there is no escape from the consequent dilemma; he was a blasphemer unless he was what he claimed to be.

And, further still, he is identical with God. A man once said to him, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Listen to his answer: "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" On another occasion he said more plainly still, "I and my Father are one."

It will be found, also, as this interview proceeds, that my *friend claims to be the Messiah.*

The word Messiah means "anointed." In old times men were anointed when they were set apart to important tasks. Kings were anointed to rule; priests to minister at the altar; prophets to teach. And Christ was anointed because he had something definite to do.

What was the errand which brought him into this world of ours? A Book was written about this matter in which his mission is made very clear. The Book referred to, which is called The Old Testament, opens with a statement that the Messiah is to come in the fullness of time to "bruise the serpent's head" and repair the damage wrought by sin. The theme of the entire Book is this Mission of the Messiah. It states specifically how he is to accomplish the work marked out for him. He comes into the world to die as a ransom, or in payment of the penalty of sin. He is to be "wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities, . . . by his stripes we are healed." The Book presents an elaborate cult or ceremonial system, the center of which is an altar on which a lamb is sacrificed. This is "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world," whose blood cleanseth from all sin. The people who were divinely "chosen" to hold this Book were accustomed to speak of the Messiah as "the Hope of Israel"; they confidently expected him to come in the fullness of time.

My friend claims to be that Messiah. To the woman of Samaria, who pathetically expressed a desire for the coming of "Messiah, he that is called Christ," he said plainly, "I that speak unto thee am he."

He emphasizes the fact that the saving power of his gospel is his death: a singular death, differing from that of all other men in that it was vicarious. He tasted death not for himself but "for every man."

We must needs pass through the little wicket-gate of eternity all alone, each for himself; but he changed places with many, dying their death that he might accomplish their salvation. Wherefore his praises are sung by a great multitude which no man can number in these words: "Worthy art thou, for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests!"

But, despite the fact that my friend is thus distinguished above all, *he presents himself to you as a suppliant.*

He has a request to make: a great request, namely, that he may be permitted to save you. He wants you to receive the benefit of his vicarious death so that, with sins forgiven, you may enter into the glory of the endless life.

This proffer is addressed to all the children of men. There is blood enough in the fountain opened for uncleanness on Calvary to cleanse all sinners even unto the uttermost. The cross of Christ proclaimed a Universal Amnesty: through it the Messiah stretches forth his hands with the invitation, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!"

But there is one condition affixed to the gift of spiritual and eternal life. It is that you shall appropriate it. This appropriation is faith, a hand stretched out to take it. Is this asking too much? "What is not worth the taking is not worth the having." My friend wants you to be free from the handicap of a mislived past, so that, unhampered, you may run up the heavenly way: but to that end you must give up all other plans of salvation whatsoever and be willing to be saved in his way. This is the great doctrine known as "Justification by Faith" reduced to its simplest terms. Only believe! "He that

will, let him take the water of life freely." The water is free, but the thirsty must dip it up and drink it.

If you refuse, what then? Then you remain just where you were. In no event can there be any ground of complaint. You stay where you elect to stay, and take your chances under the law. He that doeth the law shall live by it! But if you have broken the law, what then? The law explicitly says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and soul-death is hopeless alienation from a holy God.

If you accept the overtures of my friend, he has somewhat further to say. *He proposes to be your taskmaster,* from this time on. His words are, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

He claims the right of mastery over those who are saved through him. "Ye call me, Teacher and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." The man who is forgiven must straightway pass under the yoke. Conversion is subjugation. My friend wants you to "come"; but the moment you come he insists that you shall "go." Go where? Wherever he says.

> I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
> Over mountain and plain and sea;
> I'll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,
> I'll be what you want me to be.

His word must be henceforth your law. You are to believe what he says, no matter what the world thinks about it. And in your walk and conversation you are bound to follow in his steps. No man passes into heaven who does not first pass into commission as a servant of Christ. He is engaged in a great work, the setting up of his Kingdom in this world of ours. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He is the reaper of the world's harvest. He comes this way with sickle in hand; and if he find a man with "Christ" on his forehead and apparently nothing to do, he addresses him thus: "Why stand ye idle all the day? Say not, It is yet four months and then cometh the harvest. Lift up your eyes and see! The fields are white already unto the harvest. I go to reap. Here is a sickle for thee; thrust it in and reap. As the Father sent me into the world, so send I you. Work while it is day!"

I doubt not that my friend could accomplish his purpose without any assistance from you or me. He could restore the world to truth and righteousness by the sheer dead-lift of his omnipotence; but he has chosen otherwise. He calls us to co-operate with him. It is infinite condescension on his part thus to include us in the partnership of grace. How splendidly the possibilities of manhood are exalted by it! The greatest thing in the world is this co-partnership of saved sinners with the Saviour in the work of universal salvation. Lend a hand, my brother, if you would make your life tell.

One thing more you will discover in this interview, to wit, that *my friend is a sure paymaster.*

He asks nothing for nothing. We are saved by his grace and not by any works of our own. Yet none of our good works is for naught. He says, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward." We go to heaven by grace; but the kind of heaven we find when we get there will depend upon the faithful service which we render here and now.

In the parable of The Vineyard, he is said to have agreed with his laborers for "a penny a day." But what a penny! On one side of it is the image and superscription of the King; on the other is this legend, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

It means something to be a Christian. It means giving up some things, but nothing which is not tinctured with sin. It means taking on other things, but nothing which has not to do with the kingdom of God. And for all that we surrender we are promised "manifold more in this time and in the world to come eternal life." Manifold here and now! This is better than the best gold-bearing bonds. And in the time to come life eternal! Who shall define that? It means heaven, eternal felicity, the Master's "Well done!" It means to eat of the hidden manna and to drink of the river of life. Oh, it pays, it pays splendidly and eternally, to serve in the retinue of the only-begotten Son of God!

This is my friend to whom I would introduce you. Will you enter and commune with him? Do not stand upon cere-

mony. Be quite free. If you have aught against him, tell him so. Bring forth your strong arguments. But dispossess yourself of all prejudgments; and look candidly, dispassionately, earnestly into his face. To see him is to wonder; to know him is to love.

It was the red-letter day of my life when I made his acquaintance fifty-eight years ago. It will be the red-letter day of your life if you shall now receive him, saying, "My Lord, my life, my sacrifice, my Saviour and my all!"

New York, October 1, 1914.

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